*In the Name of Allah,*
*the All-beneficent, the All-merciful*

قال الله تعالى:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾

*"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification"*

*Surat Al-Ahzab, 33:33*

Prophetic traditions mentioned in both Sunni and Shi'ah authoritative reference books of *hadith* and *tafsir* (exegesis of the Qur'an) have confirmed that this holy verse was revealed to exclusively refer to the People of the Cloak [*ahl Al- kisa'*], viz. Muhammad, Ali, Fatimah, Al-Hasan, and Al- Husayn ('a) as the *Ahl Al- Bayt* (People of the Household). For instance, refer to the following references: *Sunni:* Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241 AH), *Al- Musnad*, 1:231; 4:107; 6:292, 304; *Sahih Muslim* (d. 261 AH), 7:130; Al- Tirmidhi (d. 279 AH), *Sunan*, 5:361 et al.; Al- Dulabi (d. 310 AH), *Al- Dhuriyyah Al- Tahirah Al- Nabawiyyah*, p. 108; Al- Nasa'i (d. 303 AH), *Al- Sunan Al- Kubra'*, 5:108; 113; Al- Hakim Al-Nayshaburi (d. 405 AH), *Al- Mustadrak 'ala' s- Sahihayn*, 2:416, 3:133, 146- 147; Al- Zarkashi (d. 794 AH), *Al- Burhan*, p. 197; Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani (d. 852 AH), *Fath Al- Bari Sharh Sahih Al- Bukhari*, 7:104.

*Shi'ah:* Al- Kulayni (d. 328 AH), *Usul Al- Kafi*, 1:287; Ibn Babawayh (d. 329 AH), *Al- Imamah wa' t- Tabsirah*, p. 47, *hadith* 29; Al- Maghribi (d. 363 AH), *Da'a'im Al- Islam*, pp. 35, 37; Al- Saduq (d. 381 AH), *Al-Khisal*, pp. 403, 550; Al- Tusi (d. 460 AH), *Al- Amali*, *hadith* 438, 482, 783.

For more details, refer to the exegesis of the holy verse recorded in the following books of *tafsir*: Al- Jassas (d. 370 AH), *Ahkam Al- Qur'an*; Al-Wahidi (d. 468 AH), *Asbab Al- Nuzul*; Ibn Al- Jawzi (d. 597 AH), *Zad Al-Masir*; Al- Qurtubi (d. 671 AH), *Al- Jami' Li- Ahkam Al- Qur'an*; Ibn Kathir (d. 774 AH), *Tafsir*; Al- Tha'labi (d. 825 AH), *Tafsir*; Al- Tabari (d. 875 AH), *Tafsir*; Al- Suyuti (d. 911 AH), *Al- Durr Al- Manthur*; Al-Shawkani (d. 1250 AH), *Fath Al- Qadir*; Al- 'Ayyashi (d. 320 AH), *Tafsir*; Al- Qummi (d. 329 AH), *Tafsir*; Furt Al- Kufi (d. 352 AH), *Tafsir* at the margin of the exegesis of *Surat Al- Nisa'* verse 59; Al- Tabarsi (d. 560 AH), *Majma' Al- Bayan*, as well as many other sources.

# A STUDY OF THE FUNDAMENTAL THEMES OF IMAMATE

قال رسول الله ﷺ:

"إني تاركُ فيكُمُ الثَقلين: كتاب الله، وعترتي أهلَ بيتي، ما إن تمسكتُم بهما لن تضلوا أبداً وأنَّهُما لَن يَفترقا حتّى يردا عَليَّ الحوضَ"

The Messenger of Allah (s) said: "Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things [thaqalayn]: The Book of Allah and my progeny ['itrati], the members of my Household [Ahl Al-Bayt]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond [hawd] (of Kawthar)."

Some references:


Al-Hakim an-Nayshaburi, Al-Mustadrak 'Ala's-Sahihayn (Beirut), vol. 3, pp. 109-110, 148, 533.

Muslim, As-Sahih, (English translation), book 31, hadiths 5920-3.

At-Tirmidhi, As-Sahih, vol. 5, pp. 621-2, hadiths 3786, 3788; vol. 2, p. 219.

An-Nasa'i, Khasa'is Ali ibn Abi Talib, hadith 79.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Al-Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 14, 17, 26; vol. 3, pp. 26, 59; vol. 4, p. 371; vol. 5, pp. 181-182, 189-190.

Ibn al-'Athir, Jami' al-Usul, vol. 1, p. 277.

Ibn Kathir, Al-Bidayah wa'n-Nihayah, vol. 5, p.209.

Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al- Qur'an Al- 'Azim, vol. 6, p.199.

Nasir ad-Din Al- Albani, Silsilat Al- Ahadith as-Sahihah (Kuwait: Ad-Dar as-Salafiyyah), vol. 4, pp. 355-358.

# A STUDY OF THE FUNDAMENTAL THEMES OF IMAMATE

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# PREFACE

The invaluable legacy of the Household [Ahl Al-Bayt] of the Prophet (may peace be upon them all), as preserved by their followers, is a comprehensive school of thought that embraces all branches of Islamic knowledge. This school has produced many brilliant scholars who have drawn inspiration from this rich and pure resource. It has provided the Muslim Ummah with many scholars whom, following in the footsteps of Imams of the Prophet's Household (‘a), have done their best to clear up the doubts raised by various creeds and currents within and without Muslim society and to answer their questions. Throughout the past centuries, they have given well-reasoned answers and clarifications concerning these questions and doubts.

To meet the responsibilities assigned to it, the Ahl Al-Bayt World Assembly (ABWA) has embarked on a defence of the sanctity of the Islamic message and its verities, often obscured by the partisans of various sects and creeds as well as by currents hostile to Islam. The Assembly follows in the footsteps of the Ahl Al-Bayt (‘a) and the disciples of their school of thought in its readiness to confront these challenges and tries to be on the frontline in consonance with the demands of every age.

The arguments contained in the works of the scholars belonging to the School of the Ahl Al-Bayt (‘a) are of unique significance. That is because they are based on genuine scholarship and appeal to reason, and avoid prejudice and bias. These arguments address scholars and

thinkers in a manner that appeals to healthy minds and wholesome human nature.

To assist the seekers of truth, the Ahl Al-Bayt World Assembly has endeavored to present a new phase of these arguments contained in the studies and translations of the works of contemporary Shi'ah writers and those who have embraced this sublime school of thought through divine blessing.

The Assembly is also engaged in editing and publishing valuable works by leading Shi'ah scholars of earlier ages to assist the seekers of the truth in discovering the truths which the School of the Prophet's Household ('a) has offered to the entire world.

The Ahl Al-Bayt World Assembly looks forward to benefit from the opinions of the readers and their suggestions and constructive criticism in this area.

We also invite scholars, translators and other institutions to assist us in propagating the genuine Islamic teachings as preached by the Prophet Muhammad (s).

We beseech God, the Most High, to accept our humble efforts and to enable us to enhance them under the auspices of Imam Al-Mahdi, His vicegerent on the earth (may Allah expedite his advent).

We express our gratitude to the author and the translator of this book. We also thank our colleagues who have participated in producing this work, especially the staff of the Translation office. ✍

***Cultural Affairs Department***
***Ahl Al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly***

# INTRODUCTION

It is possible that in the present times one may hold one of the following opinions. The topic of Imamate is a historical and unproductive debate. Whoever the Imam was and whatever his qualities were pertain to the past. Discussing these things in the present era is not only ineffectual but also detrimental, because it renews old Shi'ah - Sunni disagreements. In addition, it harms Islamic unity, which is badly needed in the present time. Isn't it better to disregard these kinds of disputes and instead tackle more essential matters?

In response, we say that the subject of Imamate is not a historical or unproductive debate, but the most important and vital issue of Islam for all times. The topic of Imamate is both an essential doctrinal principle and a fountainhead of special conviction—the adoption of a particular approach to life. Moreover, it has a political aspect that greatly influences the way of coping with life. Therefore, the subject of Imamate does not only pertain to the past, but is a crucial matter relevant to the present era as well and to all times.

That is why this topic has always been a subject of discourse and debate in the course of Islamic history and is considered one of the most important topics in the science of *kalam* (Islamic Theology). Hundreds of thousands of books and articles have been written in this regard. The number of studies that have been carried out on this

subject are more than those conducted on any other Islamic subject.

The traditions also consider Imamate to be an important Islamic issue. Islamic traditions consider knowing and following the true Imam to be an obligatory matter.

God's Apostle (s)[1] said, 'Whoever dies without knowing the Imam has died the death of pre-Islamic [pagan] ignorance.'[2]

Ibn Abi Ya'fur, a transmitter of traditions said, 'I asked Imam Sadiq ('a)[3] whether God's Apostle (s) meant death in a state of unbelief when he said, "Whoever dies without knowing the Imam has died the death of pre-Islamic [pagan] ignorance." Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "He meant death in a state of deviation." I asked, "Therefore, anyone that dies today without the Imam has died the death of pre-Islamic [pagan] ignorance?" Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "Yes."'[4]

Harith bin Mughayrah asked Imam Sadiq ('a), 'Did God's Apostle (s) say that whoever dies without knowing their Imam has died the death of pre-Islamic [pagan] ignorance?' Imam Sadiq ('a) said, 'Yes, the Noble

---

[1]. The abbreviation (s) stands for the Arabic phrase *sallallahu 'alayhi wa alihi wa sallam* (May God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny), which is repeated after the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s). [Ed.]

[2]. *Musnad Ahmad*, vol. 4, p. 96; *Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 376.

[3] The abbreviation ('a) stands for the Arabic phrases *'alayhi's-salam*, *'alayhim'us-salam*, or *'alayha's-salam* (May peace be upon him/them/her), which are repeated after the names of the prophets, Imams from the Prophet's progeny, saints, and angels ('a). [Ed.]

[4]. *Kafi,* vol. 1, p. 376.

Prophet (s) said so.' Harith asked, 'Does pre-Islamic [pagan] ignorance mean lack of academic knowledge or not knowing one's Imam?' Imam Sadiq ('a) said, 'It means the pre-Islamic [pagan] ignorance of disbelief, hypocrisy and deviation.'[1]

Imam Rida ('a) described Imamate as follows, 'Imamate is guardianship and leadership of the religion, the regulation of the Muslims, for the goodness of the world, and the glory of the believers. Imamate is the foundation of a dynamic Islam, and is a sublime branch of it. The prayers, zakat, fasting, hajj, jihad, collection of taxes and alms, decree of Islamic laws and ordinances, and protection of the country's borders are accomplished by and through the Imam. The Imam authorizes whatever God has permitted (made *halal*) and disallows whatever God has prohibited (made *haram*) as well as executing the divine limits (*hudud*) and protecting the religion.'[2]

Muhammad bin Muslim said, 'I heard Imam Muhammad Baqir ('a) say, "God does not accept the devotions of one who exerts himself in His worship while having no Imam. Such a person is misguided and lost, and his acts of worship are not accepted by God. He is like a sheep which has lost its shepherd and herd. It spends the entire day running in every direction looking for the herd it belongs to. When the darkness of the night arrives, it sees a herd of sheep, hurries towards it, and sleeps in their sheepfold until morning. In the morning when the shepherd takes the sheep to pasture, the lost sheep realizes that it does not

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1. *Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 377.
2. *Kafi,* vol. 1, p. 200.

belong to this herd and that the shepherd is other than its own.

It leaves this herd of sheep and runs here and there for some time. Then it sees another herd of sheep and hurries towards it. The shepherd [of that herd] reproaches it, and tells it that it is a lost sheep which should find its own shepherd and herd. The sheep runs in every direction, fearful and bewildered, but it has no shepherd to guide it to the pasture and the herd it belongs to. Suddenly, a wolf arrives and eats the lost sheep.

O Muhammad! I swear by God that every Muslim who has no just Imam appointed by God is as misguided and lost as this sheep. If he dies in this state, he has departed this world in a state of unbelief and hypocrisy. O Muhammad! Know that an unjust Imam and his followers are cut off from God's religion and they have fallen into misguidance. Their devotions are invalid; and, they are like ashes on a stormy day. They lack the power to protect their acts of worship and have gone far astray."'[1]

It can be deduced from the foregoing that Imamate is not a subsidiary and unnecessary theme pertaining to the past; rather, it is one of the most important Islamic matters. Knowing the attributes of the rightful Imam and the Imams themselves is extremely important, shaping one's destiny and determining the duties of Muslims in a number of respects:

1. [It identifies] who Muslims must go to in order to obtain religious laws and to solve ideological problems, and enables them to know the qualities which that person

[1]. *Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 183.

should have. Should Muslims consult the Household of the Noble Prophet, namely the infallible Imams (‘a), who are the bearers of prophetic knowledge, or consult opinionated scholars who decide based upon their own inferences (*qiyas*) and juristic preferences (*istihsan*)?

2. [It identifies] who Muslims should follow and emulate in their acts and conduct. Should Muslims follow and emulate the infallible Imams (‘a) or others?

3. [It identifies] the nature of an Islamic government and the qualities and qualifications of its rulers. Is Islamic governance a legitimate right of the infallible Imams (‘a) and their appointees or can any person - even if he is a tyrant or ignorant - exercise rule over the people?

These kinds of issues are investigated in the discourse on Imamate; and, such discourse clarifies the duties of Muslims. Discussing [controversial] issues in a scientific manner, while observing Islamic etiquettes and without prejudice or the use of profane language against a rival, is not divisive. It may even be productive in reconciling [Islamic] schools of thought.

Lastly, I deem it necessary to say that Imamate can be discussed in two ways:

The first is a study of the general issues of Imamate. That is to say, an investigation into the exigency of the Imam, the qualifications and attributes of the Imam such as the Imam’s knowledge, infallibility, miracles, the manner of choosing an Imam, as well as other issues of this nature.

The second is identifying the rightful Imams themselves and presenting evidence that proves the Imamate of each one of them.

The current book has employed the first method; therefore, general themes of Imamate will be examined. The second method necessitates the writing of another book.

I also deem it necessary to mention the fact that the original book was written twenty-five years before the [Iranian] revolution. It has recently been revised and the new edition is presented to you with a few changes and additions. It is hoped that it will be accepted by God, the Beneficent, and be a provision for the Last Abode.

**Ibrahim Amini**
Sh'aban – Ramadan 1415 AH
Sept. – Oct. 1994 AD

# FOREWORD

Islam is a complete social order which encompasses all aspects of humanity. In the same way that this religion has comprehensive laws and commandments leading to humanity's prosperity in the next world, it also has drawn up the best laws to guarantee worldly prosperity and the management of society.

Basically, Islam does not propound a boundary separating the [temporal] world from the Hereafter; rather, it has intertwined them. It is not possible for one to be a perfect Muslim without having any responsibility in social affairs. In order to prove this, it suffices to review the various Islamic laws and precepts.

Juridical laws and commandments are one of the most important parts of Islam. Judgment and arbitration have been deemed to be a religious office. In order to prevent chaos and disorder, injustice and oppression, as well as to resolve disputes and prevent the violation of people's rights, Islam considers it necessary to establish the best and most perfect judicial institutions. All the salaries of workers in the legal justice system such as judges, prosecutors, interrogators, clerks, employees, and managers along with the expenses of the court are financed by the public treasury of Islam.

Jihad in the way of God - disseminating monotheism, defending Islamic laws, and guarding Islamic countries - is one of the significant edicts of Islam. Muslims are duty

bound to fight oppressors and the plunderers of public property, as well as insurgents and depraved people.

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) said, ‘God has ordained Jihad as an obligatory (*wajib*) religious duty and said that it is helping and aiding Him. I swear by God that religion and the world cannot be reformed without jihad.’[1]

God states in the Holy Quran:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ صَفًّا كَأَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَرْصُوصٌ ﴾

*“Indeed Allah loves those who fight in His way in ranks, as if they were a compact structure.”*[2]

He also says:

﴿ وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنِ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

*“Fight them until faithlessness is no more, and religion becomes [exclusively] for Allah. Then if they relinquish, there shall be no reprisal except against the wrongdoers.”*[3]

In another place He states:

﴿قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ﴾

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1. *Wasa’il Shi‘ah*, vol. 15, p. 15, Tradition No. 19915.
2. *Qur’an* 61:4.
3. *Qur’an* 2:193.

*"Say, 'If your fathers and your sons, your brethren, your spouses, and your kinsfolk, the possessions that you have acquired, the business you fear may suffer, and the dwellings you are fond of, are dearer to you than Allah and His Apostle and to waging jihad in His way, then wait until Allah issues His edict, and Allah does not guide the transgressing lot'."*[1]

The Muslims must have powerful and well-equipped troops in order to confront the forces of unbelief and materialism. Their armies should have superiority [both] in number and in fighting power over the forces of unbelief. They have to be supplied with the best weaponry so that the enemies of monotheism and religion will be apprehensive and afraid of the fighting capability of the Muslims and, as a result, not even dream of invading or attacking them.

God states in the Holy Qur'an:

﴿وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ﴾

*"Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses, awing thereby the enemy of Allah, and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you do not know, but Allah knows them. And whatever you spend in the way of Allah will be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged."*[2]

Therefore, Military and Defence,along with all of its subdivisions and affiliates, such as: the military academy,

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[1]. *Qur'an* 9:24.
[2]. *Qur'an* 8:60.

[other] centers of military education, the centers for the invention and production of different kinds of military weaponry, and the procurement of means of transportation for air, land and sea are all part of Islam and the attainment of all of these is the duty of the Muslims.

Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is another major Islamic commandment and the obligation of every Muslim. Guiding and leading the people, as well as summoning them to goodness and dissuading them from corruption and oppression, is a public responsibility. With this objective in mind, Muslims should always have ready and well-equipped forces.

The Holy Qur'an states:

﴿وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ﴾

*"There has to be a nation among you summoning to the good, bidding what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. It is they who are the felicitous."*[1]

Prescribed penalties, indemnities, and discretionary punishments are also part of Islamic law. A murderer must either be killed or pay blood money. In Islamic law, a particular compensation has been prescribed for every injury that is made to a person's body. A thief's hand should be cut off. Adultery, fornication and sodomy all have specific penalties and punishments. Divine Laws have to be enforced in order to prevent corruption and transgression.

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[1]. *Qur'an* 3:104.

Islam has foreseen the requisite budget, which Muslims pay as Islamic tax, for the administration of the nation and the procurement of the public requirements. *Zakat*[1] and *khums*[2] are two big parts of Islamic tax. These revenues are used to provide the living expenses for the poor, indigent, and jobless. In addition, the bankrupt, indebted and stranded are helped. By means of this budget, charitable and welfare institutions such as hospitals, Psychiatric hospitals, clinics, bathhouses, mosques, high schools, universities, Islamic seminaries, centers of research and health care are established, and the roads of Islamic countries are repaired. These funds are used to propagate religion and Islamic laws, fight corruption, and educate [the people]. *Khums* and *zakat* are two substantial resources for the extensive Islamic budget. If collected correctly, *khums* and *zakat* are sufficient for the administration of an Islamic country and the procurement of public needs. By means of this wealth, all of the offices and institutions of an Islamic country, such as the expenses of the army, public education, propagation, the justice department, police, governor's offices, and the municipal budget may be furnished.

It can be deduced by investigation into the social and political laws of Islam, some of which have been alluded to in the above examples, that the legislator of those laws desired the emergence of orderly institutions inside the Islamic environment. He also wanted some people to take charge of enforcing those laws and managing the Islamic

[1]. A prescribed religious tax that must be given on nine specific items

[2]. Twenty percent or a fifth tax levied on certain items.

nation. In this way, public order and security would be established; and, transgressions and the disruption of the government would be prevented. It is impossible for Islam to have legislation in political, social, juridical, penal, and legal affairs but offer no opinion or intervention with respect to the enforcer of those laws.

The laws and precepts of jihad alone attest to the fact that Islam wants Muslims to always have an orderly and well-equipped army as much as is needed and conforming to current standards. [The Islamic army] has to be powerful enough with respect to military knowledge and weaponry to be able to defend an Islamic country. It goes without saying that this is not possible without orderly institutions and the presence of responsible experts at the top.

Islamic juridical laws are the best attestation that Islam wants expert, upright, and eligible people to be heads of institutions and to take charge of enforcing those laws and managing judicial affairs.

*Zakat* and *khums*, which are Islamic taxes, cannot be collected and allocated without an appointed tax collector. This very decree is the best proof that there has to be a group of people to take charge of collecting and safeguarding these taxes so that they may be spent in specified areas of usage. The Holy Qur'an has identified the expenses of the *zakat* collectors to be one of the lawful usages of *zakat*.

In short, all Islamic administrative areas are in need of a responsible individual and guarantor of execution [of Islamic law]. Also, all Islamic ministries and social departments also need to be headed by a professional, upright, and trustworthy individual to supervise their work

and to manage the Islamic country according to the Divine Laws and precepts.

It can therefore be deduced from such issues that Islam is not an isolationist creed which separates religion from the [temporal] world and specifies bounds for each of them; rather, it can be concluded that Islam has intertwined religion and the [corporeal] world. It has placed the leadership and management of social affairs in the heart of religion. Government too is nothing other than this. Specific people who take charge of administering a country and managing the people's social affairs are called the government. A ruler can base his government upon Divine Laws and precepts, and forestall the appearance of oppression and transgression in his governmental system.

Therefore, it is not sensible for one to say that divine religions did not and do not intervene in the formation of government, and that the rank of the Prophets (‘a) and the pure Imams (‘a) is too lofty for them to intervene in the issue of government. Is there anything better than that the Prophet (s) or Imam (‘a), an infallible leader who is immune from any kind of error and lapse, should take the reins of power and enforce the social and political laws of religion? Can it be said that elucidating religious laws is not below the Prophet's or Imam's dignity but that executing them is opposed to his dignity?!

For this reason, it can generally be said that each one of the former Prophets (‘a) has had a particular system of government and in reality a kind of rule – no matter how limited – within the confines of his ability and on the basis of the suitability of conditions and general circumstances within the environment of his followers.

The Holy Qur'an says:

﴿كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ﴾

*"Mankind were a single community; then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed, and none differed in it except those who had been given it, after the manifest proofs had come to them, out of envy among themselves. Then Allah guided those who had faith to the truth of what they differed in, by His will, and Allah guides whomever He wishes to a straight path."*[1]

With respect to the people of the Prophet Lot ('a), it says:

﴿وَلُوطًا آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا﴾

*"We gave judgement and knowledge to Lot, and We delivered him from the town which used to commit vicious acts. Indeed they were an evil and profligate lot."*[2]

In regard to the Prophet Joseph ('a), it says:

﴿وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا﴾

*"When he came of age, We gave him judgement and [sacred] knowledge, and thus do We reward the virtuous."*[3]

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1. *Qur'an* 2:213.
2. *Qur'an* 21:74.
3. *Qur'an* 12:22.

Again, it states:

﴿ رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ ﴾

*"My Lord! You have granted me a share in the kingdom, and taught me the interpretation of dreams. Originator of the heavens and earth! You are my guardian in this world and the Hereafter! Let my death be in submission [to You], and unite me with the Righteous."*[1]

And concerning the Prophet David ('a), it says:

﴿ يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ ﴾

*"O David! Indeed We have made you a vicegerent on the earth. So judge between people with justice, and do not follow desire, or it will lead you astray from the way of Allah. Indeed those who stray from the way of Allah-there is a severe punishment for them because of their forgetting the Day of Reckoning."*[2]

And regarding Prophet Solomon ('a), it says:

﴿ قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ﴾

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1. *Qur'an* 12:101.
2. *Qur'an* 38:26.

*"He said, 'My Lord! Forgive me, and grant me a kingdom that does not befit anyone except me. Indeed You are the All-munificent'."*[1]

Pharaoh did not oppose Prophet Moses ('a) due to his explaining the Divine Laws; rather, he opposed him because Moses ('a) wanted to liberate the Children of Israel from the yoke of servitude and the despotic laws of Pharaoh. Moses ('a) encountered the Pharaoh's hostility because he aspired to *enforce* the Divine Laws among the Children of Israel, and said:

﴿ قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴾

*"We are the apostles of your Lord. Let the Children of Israel go with us, and do not torture them! We certainly bring you a sign from your Lord, and may peace be upon him who follows guidance!"*[2]

## GOD'S PROPHET (S) WAS THE LEADER OF THE MUSLIMS

The Noble Prophet (s) led a government amongst the Muslims. In reality the authority and management of their political and social affairs was in his hands. He was their leader and had authority over them.

In this regard, the Holy Qur'an says:

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1. *Qur'an* 38:35.
2. *Qur'an* 20:47.

﴿النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَى أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا﴾

*"The Prophet is closer to the faithful than their own souls, and his wives are their mothers. The blood relatives are more entitled to inherit from one another in the Book of Allah than the [other] faithful and Emigrants, barring any favor you may do your comrades. This has been written in the Book."*[1]

He used to rule and judge between them. The Holy Quran states:

﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ﴾

*"We have sent down to you the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it of the Book and as a guardian over it. So judge between them by what Allah has sent down, and do not follow their desires against the truth that has come to you. For each [community] among you We had appointed a code [of law] and a path, and had Allah wished He would have made you one community, but [His purposes required] that He should test you in respect to what He has given you. So take the*

[1]. *Qur'an* 33:6.

*lead in all good works. To Allah shall be the return of you all, whereat He will inform you concerning that about which you used to differ."*[1]

At the start of his prophetic mission, he introduced 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) as his successor.

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) has narrated that the Lord of the universe ordered the Noble Prophet (s) to invite his relatives to his home [for a meal]. After the meal, the Noble Prophet (s) asked his close relatives, "Which of you is ready to help me in this matter [of religion], and be my brother, executor and caliph?" No one, except me, responded in the affirmative to the Noble Prophet's call, although I was the youngest of them all, had sore eyes [at the time], a swollen stomach, and thin legs. I said, "O Prophet of God! I am ready to help you and be your vizier." The Prophet (s) put his arm around my shoulder and said, "This is my brother, inheritor and successor amongst you. You must listen to what he says and obey him." People stood up laughing and told my father, Abu Talib, 'It has become binding (*wajib*) upon you to listen to and obey your son.'[2]

The Noble Prophet (s) prayed to the Lord of the universe, "O Lord! I ask you to appoint for me a vizier from my family. O Lord! Appoint 'Ali to be my vizier and brother."[3]

God's Prophet (s) used to dispatch individuals to be judges in Islamic lands. One of those people was 'Ali bin Abi

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1. *Qur'an* 5:48.
2. *Kamil*, vol. 1, p. 586; *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 1, pp. 542-543.
3. *Yanabi' al-Mawadah*, vol. 1, p. 258.

Talib (‘a). Ibn ‘Abbas says, ‘The Prophet (s) sent ‘Ali to Yemen and said, “Teach them Divine Laws and injunctions, and judge between them.”’[1]

Masruq said that at the time of the Noble Prophet (s) six people, namely ‘Ali (a), ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ud, Abi bin Ka‘b, Zayd bin Thabit, ‘Umar and Abu Musa Ash‘ari, used to pass judgments.[2]

For example: ‘Itab bin Asid was the emir of Mecca, Bazan was the governor of Yemen, ‘Amir bin Shahr Hamadhani was dispatched to Yemen, ‘Abdullah bin ‘Amr bin Sabi‘ was the governor of Bani Taghlabah, Abu Musa Ash‘ari was the governor of some areas in Yemen, Harith bin Bilal Marani was the governor of a part of Bani Tay, Hirth bin Nufil Hashimi was the governor of some environs of Mecca, Harith bin ‘Abdulmuttalib was the ambassador to some places in Mecca, Sa’ib bin ‘Uthman was appointed governor of Medina during the battle of Bawat, Sa‘id bin Khafaf Tamimi was the governor of the tribe of Tamim, Salamah bin Yazid Ja‘fi was the governor of Marwan, Sifi bin ‘Amir was the ambassador of Bithalbah, Dahak bin Qays (was a governor), Amra’ al-Qays bin Asbagh was the governor of the tribe of Kalb, Harith bin Bilal Mazni (was a governor), ‘Abdulrahman bin Ayzi was the governor of Khurasan, ‘Akashah bin Thur was the governor of Sakasik and Sukun, ‘Ala’ bin Hadrami was the governor of Bahrain, ‘Umar bin Hazm Ansari was the governor of Najran, ‘Umar bin Mahjub ‘Amiri (was a governor), ‘Auf and Rakani were governors, ‘Abdullah Zayd Kindi was the governor of Yemen, ‘Abdullah bin

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1. *Al-Taratib al-Adariyah*, vol. 1, p. 257.
2. *Ibid*, p. 257.

Sawar was the governor of Bahrain, Furuh bin Masik was the governor of Murad, Madhaj and Zubayd (were governors), Marwah bin Nafatah Sululi was the governor of Sulul, Abu Jad‘ Muradi (was a governor), Qaza‘ah bin ‘Amir Dusi was the governor of Bani Asad, Qays bin Malik Arhabi was the ambassador to Hamadan, Mandhar bin Sawi Darami was the governor of Hajr, Sawad bin ‘Aziyah Balawi was the ambassador to Khaybar, ‘Abdullah bin Abi Rabi‘ah Makhzumi (was a governor), Khalid bin Walid was the governor of Sana‘a’, Maghafir bin Abi Umayyah was the governor of Kandah, Ziyad bin Labib was the governor of Hadr Maut, Ma‘adh bin Jabal was the governor of Janad and Abu Sufyan was the governor of Najran.[1]

The above mentioned people were some of those who served in the government of the Noble Prophet (s). They were district, city or provincial governors, and tribal leaders. Each one of them managed the social affairs in the area they were assigned to.

It was the Noble Prophet’s (s) custom to immediately appoint and dispatch a governor to whatever land he conquered. Sometimes God’s Prophet (s) himself oversaw the people’s activities; and, at other times he appointed someone else to supervise and watch over the people.

For instance, he appointed Sa‘id bin ‘As to supervise the marketplace of Mecca. Ibn ‘Umar recounts that during the time of God’s Prophet (s), a number of people met and did business with [foreign] merchants on a black market. The Prophet of God (s) appointed people to stop this activity

[1]. *Ibid*, pp. 240-246.

and didn't permit anyone to trade on black markets.[1] 'Umar was in charge of overseeing the marketplace of Medina.[2]

Whenever God's Prophet (s) left Medina, he would appoint someone to be his representative. During the battle of Tabuk, he designated Imam 'Ali ('a) as the caliph. Other people who were appointed as the Noble Prophet's representatives are Lababah, Bashir bin Mandhar, 'Uthman bin 'Affan, 'Abdullah bin Umm Maktum, Abudhar, 'Abdullah bin 'Abdullah bin Abi Salul, Saba' bin 'Arfatah, Namilah bin 'Abdullah, 'Arif bin Adbat, Abu Rahm, Muhammad bin Muslimah Ansari, Zayd bin Harithah, Sa'ib bin 'Uthman, Abu Salamah bin 'Abdulasad, Sa'd bin 'Ibadah and Abu Dajanah Sa'idi.[3]

The Islamic army used to operate in an orderly and well planned out manner. The whole army had one general commander, and the army itself was arranged into five divisions: the heart of the army, the right, left, front, and rear divisions. It [also] had a standard bearer, a keeper of the weapons, infantry, armored units, and even guards and spies. And, every division had a supervising commander.[4]

Public taxes and income such as: *zakat*, *jiziyah*[5], the spoils (of war), and land taxes were collected in a precise and well programmed manner with specific people in charge of these.

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1. *Ibid*, p. 258.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 287.
3. *Ibid*, pp. 314-316.
4. *Ibid*, vol. 1, pp. 396-398.
5. The head tax imposed on all non-Muslims living under the protection of an Islamic government.

For example, Khalid bin Sa‘id bin ‘As, Ma‘adh bin Jabal, ‘Adi bin Hatam, Zabarqan bin Badr, ‘Umar bin Kha ṭab, Arqam bin Abi al-Arqam, Kafiyah bin Saba‘, Hadhifah bin Yaman, Kahl bin Malik, Khalid bin Barsa’, Khazimah bin ‘Asim, Rafi‘ bin Mukit, Sahl bin Manjab, ‘Akramah bin Abi Jahl, Malik bin Nuwirah, Mutamam bin Nuwirah, and Mardas bin Malik were some of those who were appointed to make collections.[1]

Zubayr bin ‘Awam, Jahm bin Salt, and Hadhifah bin Yaman recorded the charitable donations.[2] Abu Ubaydah bin Jarah and Ma‘adh bin Jabal were in charge of collecting *jiziyah*.

The limits and sanctions of Islam were enforced by the Noble Prophet (s) and his officers and governors. Through these representatives blood money was paid to victims and their families, and other individual rights were upheld.

In short, a study of the life of the Noble Prophet and his conduct reveals that in addition to receiving the Divine Laws by means of revelation, and in addition to his general guidance of the people in disseminating and interpreting the *shari‘ah*, he also enforced the political and social laws of Islam, and thus directed the Muslim community. That is to say, he governed them. This was a duty assigned to him by God.

The Holy Qur’an states:

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1. *Ibid*, vol. 1, pp. 313-391.
2. *Ibid*, p. 398.

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتَيْنِ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِئَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ﴾

*"O Prophet! Urge on the faithful to fight: If there be twenty patient men among you, they shall overcome two hundred; and if there be a hundred of you, they shall overcome a thousand of the faithless, for they are a lot who do not understand."*[1]

It also states:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ حَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى الْقِتَالِ﴾

*"O Prophet! Wage jihad against the faithless and the hypocrites, and be severe with them. Their refuge shall be hell, and it is an evil destination."*[2]

In another place it states:

﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ﴾

*"Indeed We have sent down to you the Book with the truth, so that you may judge between the people by what Allah has shown you; do not be an advocate for the traitors."*[3]

Therefore, not only did the Prophet (s) state the laws of the *shari'ah*, he also organized a government, and brought directives for managing the Muslims. Muslims were duty bound to follow his directives. In the following verses, the Holy Qur'an has emphasized obeying the Messenger:

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1. *Qur'an* 8:65.
2. *Qur'an* 9:73.
3. *Qur'an* 4:105.

﴿ النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَى أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴾

*"The Prophet is closer to the faithful than their own souls, and his wives are their mothers. The blood relatives are more entitled to inherit from one another in the Book of Allah than the [other] faithful and Emigrants, barring any favour you may do your comrades. This has been written in the Book."*[1]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا﴾

*"O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you have faith in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome."*[2]

﴿ وَإِذْ زَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَقَالَ لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَإِنِّي جَارٌ لَكُمْ فَلَمَّا تَرَاءَتِ الْفِئَتَانِ نَكَصَ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ وَقَالَ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِنْكُمْ إِنِّي أَرَى مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴾

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[1]. *Qur'an* 33:6.
[2]. *Qur'an* 4:59.

*"And obey Allah and His Apostle, and do not dispute, or you will lose heart and your power will be gone. And be patient; indeed Allah is with the patient."*[1]

﴿ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا ﴾

*"We did not send any apostle but to be obeyed by Allah's leave. Had they, when they wronged themselves, come to you and pleaded to Allah for forgiveness, and the Apostle had pleaded for forgiveness for them, they would have surely found Allah All-clement, All-merciful."*[2]

In such verses, obedience to the Noble Prophet (s) has been placed next to obedience to God and has been made compulsory (*wajib*). Obedience to God means acting upon His laws and commandments that have been conveyed [to humankind] through His Messenger (s). Whoever acts upon the laws and dictates of the *Shari'ah* has obeyed God.

Furthermore, according to these verses, Muslims were obliged to also obey God's Prophet (s); that is to say, they were duty bound to follow his directives. It becomes clear that the Noble Messenger (s) also had issued edicts and directives which were obligatory (*wajib*) to follow. Those laws consisted of edicts which were issued in his administering the affairs of the (Islamic) nation.

Therefore, there is no doubt regarding the fact that, in addition to receiving revelation and the Divine Laws, the Noble Prophet (s) held a position called government. In

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1. *Qur'an* 8:46.
2. *Qur'an* 4:64.

other words, the position of leadership and administration was part of his prophethood and is included in the verse:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا﴾

*O Prophet! Indeed We have sent you as a witness, as a bearer of good news and as a warner.*[1]

In words and practice, God's Prophet (s) was a warner and bringer of good tidings. By enforcing the limits and legal laws of Islam he prevented transgressions and corruption and warned the people. The Holy Qur'an considers submission to the Prophet's government and directives to be one of the signs of faith (*iman*). God states:

﴿فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا﴾

*But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission*.[2]

During the conquest of Mecca, Abu Sufyan was amazed when he saw the orderly Islamic army progressing group by group in a disciplined way, and saw God's Prophet (s) moving among the Emigrants (*Muhajirun*)[3] and the

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1. *Qur'an* 33:45.
2. *Qur'an* 4:65.
3. These were the natives of Mecca who, after entering the fold of Islam, had emigrated along with the Noble Prophet (s) from Mecca to Medina in order to escape being tortured by the Meccan idolaters.

Helpers (*Ansar*)[1] with greatness and grandeur. He told ‘Abbas bin ‘Abdulmuttalib, ‘Your nephew has attained great kingship.’ ‘Abbas bin ‘Abdulmuttalib responded, ‘This is not kingship, but rather prophethood.’[2]

## AFTER GOD’S PROPHET (S)

According to many [historical] accounts available in reliable Shi‘ah and Sunni books, the Noble Prophet (s) pronounced Imam ‘Ali (‘a) to be the caliph, Imam and leader of the Muslims.

On the day when the Noble Prophet (s) invited his close relatives [to embrace Islam], he said, ‘This person i.e. ‘Ali is my brother, inheritor and successor. You *must* listen to him and obey him.’[3]

At Ghadir Khum, he raised Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) hand in the presence of thousands of people and said, ‘Do I not have more right over the believers than they do over themselves?’ They said, ‘You do, O Prophet of God!’ Then he said, ‘For whomever I am their leader, ‘Ali (‘a) is their leader.’ Then he said, ‘O Lord! Love those who love him and hate those who hate him.’ Then ‘Umar bin Khattab came forward and said, ‘Congratulations O son of

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1. These were the natives of Medina who welcomed, helped and supported the Noble Prophet (s) and Meccan’s who had migrated to Medina.
2. *Al-Sirat al-Nubuwiyah*, vol. 5, pp. 61-62.
3. *Al-Kamil*, vol. 1, p. 586.

Abu Talib! Today you have become the leader of the believing men and women.'[1]

These kinds of [historical] accounts prove that the Noble Prophet (s) left his position and rank to 'Ali bin Abu Talib ('a) and appointed him to the post of leadership and governorship. God's Prophet (s) entrusted Imam 'Ali ('a) with the same absolute rule and authority over the Muslims that he himself had.

At Ghadir Khum, he said, Do I not have more right over the believers than they do over themselves?'?' In other words, 'Don't I have complete authority over you?' After their admission of this, he said, 'For whomever I am their Master, 'Ali ('a) is their Master.'

'Umar had also understood this same meaning when he said, 'Congratulations O son of Abu Talib! Today you have become the leader of the believing men and women.' In other words, 'Umar meant to say, 'Congratulations on this appointment, O son of Abu Talib! You have gained complete authority over all the believers.'

Some of the traditions about Ghadir Khum state that the people present at Ghadir Khum paid allegiance to Imam 'Ali (a). Paying allegiance itself is the best evidence that Imam 'Ali ('a) had been appointed to the position of caliphate and leadership. It was not just the position of interpreting the laws and commandments of the *Shari'ah* which had been given to him, because explaining the Divine Laws does not call for paying allegiance.

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[1]. *Yanabi' al-Mawadah*, vol. 2, p. 158.

By referring to the foregoing traditions, it becomes clear that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) had been appointed by God’s Prophet (s) to the position of governorship, Imamate and leadership, and that he was the legitimate ruler of the Muslims. However, after the Noble Prophet’s (s) sorrowful demise, a group of his companions usurped the position of leadership - Imam ‘Ali’s legal right - through their scheming and conspiracy.

Imam ‘Ali’s refusal to pay allegiance to the self-appointed caliphs, as well as his many sermons, debates and protests, were due to the usurpation of his legitimate authority and not because he wished to elucidate the Divine Laws. Because, not only the caliphs did not stop him from explaining the laws of the *shari‘ah*, but they themselves used to have recourse to him when in difficulties.

‘Umar himself admitted this and frequently said, ‘If it weren’t for‘Ali, ‘Umar would have been destroyed.’ Imam ‘Ali (‘a) used to say, ‘For God’s sake, O [community of] Emigrants (*Muhajirun*)! Do not take Muhammad’s leadership and government away from his Household, and do not deprive his Household of their position. I swear to God, O [community of] Emigrants (*muhajirun*), that we are more deserving of this position. We, the *Ahl al-Bayt*, are more worthy of the caliphate than you.’[1]

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) wrote to his brother, ‘The Quraysh have cut family ties and united against me. They have usurped my cousin’s government and given it to a person who was not like me with respect to his kinship and Islamic rights.’[2]

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1. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 29.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 75.

In the gathering at Saqifah, the dispute revolved around [the question of] government, not the interpretation of the laws and commandments of the *shari'ah*. The contention was over who should be the Commander of the Faithful and have complete authority. No one claimed that he was more deserving than others to interpret Divine Laws. In the al-Shaqshaqiyah sermon[1] and at other times, Imam

[1]. The following is the al-Shaqshaqiyah sermon:
Beware! By Allah, the son of Abu Quhafa (Abu Bakr) dressed himself with it (i.e. the caliphate) and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill. He knew that a flood of knowledge flows from me and the wing of grand thoughts cannot fly to the level of my knowledge. I covered the caliphate with a curtain and kept myself detached from it.
Then I began to consider whether I should attack or endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations wherein adults are made feeble, the young grow old, and the true believer acts under strain till he meets Allah (at his death). I found that endurance thereat was wiser, so I adopted patience although it was as if something was pricking my eye and my throat was suffocating (with mortification). I watched the plundering of my inheritance until the first one went his way but then handed over the caliphate to Ibn Khatab after himself.
[Then he quoted the verses of A'sha.]
What a great difference between these days with so many hardships and the days of Hayyan, the brother of Jabir who is drowning in pleasure.
It is strange that during his (Abu Bakr's) lifetime he wished to be released from the caliphate, but then he confirmed it for the other one after his death. These two strictly shared the udders of governance among themselves. Governance turned to harsh conditions and the power was transferred to a person ('Umar) who had the characteristics of severity and brutality, whose mistakes were numerous, and so also his excuses. The one in contact with it

was like the rider of an unruly camel. If he pulled up its reins the nostrils would be slit, but if he let it loose he would be thrown. Consequently, by Allah, the people [*ummat*] became embroiled in the second government's mistakes, instability, and deviation from the way of Allah.

Nevertheless, I remained patient despite the lengthy period and stiff trial until, when he ('Umar) went his way (died), he put the matter (of the caliphate) in the hands of a council and regarded me to be one of them. But O God! What a council it was! Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones? Unavoidably, I relinquished and I cooperated with them. One of them turned against me because of his hatred and did not vote in my favor, another became inclined in a different direction due to a relationship with his in – laws and this thing and that which is not worthy of mention, until the third was chosen for the position of caliphate.

His main agenda was satiating his appetites. He (as caliph) and his father's family (Bani Umayyah) began swallowing up Allah's wealth like a camel devouring the foliage of spring and plundering the Muslim treasury. As a result, his plan was shattered, his deeds caused the people to oppose him, and his voracity brought about his downfall.

At that moment, I was shocked by the crowd of people rushing to me (to show allegiance). They advanced towards me from every side, so much so that Hasan and Husayn were getting crushed and both ends of my shoulder garment were torn. They collected around me like a herd of sheep and goats. But then, when I took up the reins of government, one party broke away and another turned disobedient, while the rest began acting wrongfully as if they had not heard the word of Allah saying, *'This is the abode of the Hereafter which We shall grant to those who do not desire to domineer in the earth nor to cause corruption, and the outcome will be in favor of the Godwary.'* (Qur'an 28: 83). Yes, by Allah, they had heard it and understood it but the world glittered in their eyes and its embellishments seduced them. Behold, by Him who split the seed (to grow) and created living beings, if the masses had

'Ali ('a) complained that they ignored his virtues and prevented him from [assuming] leadership, which was his legitimate right.

In Nahj al-Balagha, he says, 'Someone said to me, "O son of Abu Talib, you are eager for the caliphate." I told him, "Rather, you are greedier [for it] even though you are more remote, and I am more suited and nearer to it. I have demanded it as my right, while you are intervening between me and it."'[1]

It was government and leadership that they usurped from Imam 'Ali ('a), not the interpretation of Divine Laws. If leadership were not a part of the Imamate, all the protests and assertions of Fatimah, Imam 'Ali, his companions, and his supporters would have been unjustifiable.

When he assumed the caliphate, he took charge of all its aspects, such as: issuing orders for jihad, appointing governors, judges, army commanders and collectors of *zakat* and *khums*, enforcing prescribed penalties and blood-money, as well as spending public funds in specified areas. At that time, he said, 'By Allah, I have

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not come to me (to show allegiance) and my supporters had not exhaustively proven the argument (in favor of my caliphate), and if there had been no pledge [before] Allah with the religious and secular scholars to the effect that they should not remain silent in the face of the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed, I would have cast the rope of the caliphate on its own shoulders (thrown aside governance) and would have given the last one the same treatment as the first one. In that case you would have seen that in my view this world of yours is no better than the rheum of a goat. [Tr.]

[1]. *Nahj al-Balagha*, sermon no. 171.

been continually deprived of my right from the day the Prophet (s) died till today.'

Talhah and Zubayr did not begin the Battle of Jamal in order to interpret Divine Laws. They were opposed to Imam 'Ali's government. During the Battle of Jamal, Talhah told Imam 'Ali ('a), 'Resign from leadership so that we may entrust it to a consultative council (*shura*).'[1]

Mu'awiyah did not disagree with Imam 'Ali ('a) regarding elucidation of Divine Laws. He disputed over the leadership. Imam 'Ali ('a) and Mu'awiyah both sought leadership of the government, but Imam 'Ali ('a) sought leadership in order to execute the Divine Laws and justice, whereas Mu'awiyah coveted leadership in order to attain power and carnal desires.

If leadership was Imam 'Ali's ('a) right and God had made it for him, then it was not unbefitting of his status. Imam 'Ali ('a) handed over that same position, namely the Imamate and legitimate government which had been entrusted to him by the Noble Prophet (s), to his son Imam Hasan ('a).

Imam Hasan ('a) assumed the caliphate and Imamate after [the sad demise of] his honorable father. The Shi`ah in Kufa swore allegiance to him with the intention that they should accept his rule and submit to his directives, not that he should only interpret the *Shari'ah* for them. Interpretation of Divine Laws does not call for swearing allegiance. It was with respect to this very position of leadership and government that Mu'awiyah rebelled, not in regard to disseminating religion and explaining the

[1]. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 95.

*shari'ah*. Basically, Mu'awiyah had nothing to do with prayers, fasting and the elucidation of Divine Laws.

At the time of his death, Imam Hasan ('a) too handed over to his brother Imam Husayn ('a) that same position and rank which he had inherited from his father and grandfather and which was his legitimate right. Even though Imam Husayn ('a) had not apparently attained leadership in practice, he nonetheless maintained that it was his legitimate right and regarded Mu'awiyah and Yazid as usurpers of that position.

Imam Hasan ('a), while delivering a speech, addressed Mu'awiyah as follows, 'You have deprived us of the inheritance passed to us from our father.'[1]

After performing the afternoon prayer, he told Hurr and his companions, 'O People! You will earn God's pleasure if you fear Him and hand over authority to its rightful owners. We, the Ahl al-Bayt, are more deserving to hold this position than those who claim it but are not fit for it and commit injustice and oppression.'[2]

In short, at the time of their deaths, each one of the pure Imams ('a) handed over their God-given rank to the next Imam, whom they introduced to the people as their leader.

Each one of the Imams ('a), due to their inherent merit and competence, were appointed to the position of Imamate and leadership by the Lord of the universe. However, since the level of people's understanding was not enough for them to be able to understand the advantages (and

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1. *Ibid*, p. 209.
2. *Al-Kamil*, vol. 3, p. 408.

virtues) of government and leadership by an infallible person, the people did not diligently endeavor to establish a government of truth. For this reason, the governance of the Imams was not established in practice. Despite this, they regarded the leadership and caliphate to be their legitimate right, and declared the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphs to be usurpers.

Dawud bin Firqad related, ‘I said to Imam Sadiq (‘a), “God has granted Bani Umayyah sovereignty, according to the verse:

﴿ قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾

*“Say, ‘O Allah, Master of all sovereignty! You give sovereignty to whomever You wish, and strip of sovereignty whomever You wish; You make mighty whomever You wish, and You abase whomever You wish; all good is in Your hand. Indeed You have power over all things.”*[1]

Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, “It is not as people imagine. God has given us sovereignty; however, Bani Umayyah usurped it. It is like clothing which is owned by one person and seized [from him] by another person. That garment does not belong to the one who has taken it.”’[2]

It was based on this legitimate right that they were given the *zakat* and *khums* taxes.

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1. *Qur’an* 3:26.
2. *Rudah al-Kafi*, p. 222; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 288.

The foregoing discussion has clarified that governance and leadership by an infallible person is a central part of religion and has been a part of the course of action of the Prophets (‘a) and pure Imams (‘a). This position is not only befitting of their status, but is also considered to be one of their significant duties.

What is higher than that an infallible person who has complete knowledge of Divine Laws and is endowed with divine approval should hold the reins of power and bring about the best and healthiest society through the implementation of the Divine Laws?

## DURING THE IMAM'S (‘A) ABSENCE (OCCULTATION)

All nations and people have complete agreement on the need for a leader and the establishment of a government. No rational person has any doubt that living in chaos is impossible. There have to be people that take charge of affairs, prevent disorder and transgressions by implementing just and perfect laws, provide welfare services, and ensure public security.

This is a clear and indisputable principle for rational people. Islam not only doesn't reject this rational issue, it confirms its necessity. In Islam the Noble Prophet (s) and the twelve infallible Imams (‘a) hold the position of leadership and authority. The people are supposed to obey their directives and struggle to help their government by preparing whatever is necessary for it, improving its

circumstances, helping in its establishment, and assisting to strengthen it.

This issue is so important that it is not permissible to neglect this duty at any time or under any conditions. Even when there is no access to an infallible leader or even if the public opinion had not reached the level of being able to accept the government of an infallible leader (‘a), this necessary principle still holds true for all rational people. Such people still say that everyone must help in selecting competent, upright, and reliable individuals and entrust their affairs to these individuals. This will prevent disorder, the political and social laws of Islam will be enforced, and transgressions and violations [of people’s rights] will be avoided. Islam, which affords the position of leadership and government so much importance that it has appointed an infallible person to take charge of this position, will never be content with abandoning this guidance. Islam, with its lofty ambitions and accurate opinions, believes that the best individuals, those who are immune from any kind of sin and error, are befitting for upright leadership. Islam would never be satisfied with people being indifferent with respect to determining their own destiny, neglecting to establish a competent and just government, or submitting to an incompetent, oppressive and selfish leader.

Consider this verse:

﴿وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقِبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ﴾

*“Muhammad is but an apostle; [other] apostles have passed before him. If he dies or is slain, will you turn back*

*on your heels? Anyone who turns back on his heels, will not harm Allah in the least, and soon Allah will reward the grateful."*[1]

The foregoing verse was revealed during the battle of Uhud. In this battle the Islamic army came under intense enemy attack, and even the life of the Noble Prophet (s) was in danger. Someone called out that Muhammad (s) had been killed. Upon hearing this news, the Muslims thought they had no leader and thus scattered in every direction. In fact, this news was false, and the Noble Prophet's life was saved through the sacrifices and altruism of a few of his companions.

The news that the Noble Prophet (s) was alive slowly spread among the Muslim soldiers, whereupon they regained their strength and composure and rushed to his side. It was then that the foregoing verse was revealed. Its message to Muslims is this that Muhammad (s) is but an apostle like other apostles that have passed away before him. If he dies or is slain, will you turn back on your heels, lose your composure, scatter in every direction, and relinquish the jihad?

The above mentioned verse has entrusted the necessity of preserving social order to the understanding of rational people. It has stated that even if the Noble Prophet (s) were martyred, Muslims must not cast aside their social order and relinquish the jihad under any circumstances.

The principle of establishing a government and the existence of a leader was so definite and obvious among

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[1]. *Qur'an* 3:144.

the Muslims and the Noble Prophet's companions that no one ever sought to deny it.

In the council that was set up in the Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah, all [Muslims] were unanimous in the need for a leader and caliph. Ultimately, the Helpers (*Ansar*) said that leadership was their right, whereas the Emigrants (*Muhajirun*) said that they were more worthy of it. Some were saying, 'We should be the leader and you be the vizier.' Another group was saying that there should be a leader from each side. But, no one said that there was no need to select a caliph, and that it was possible to preserve the social order without a leader. Even later when Imam 'Ali ('a) and a number of Muslims sought to oppose [the decisions made in the Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah], they did not say that there was no need for a caliph. Rather, Imam 'Ali ('a) said that he was more deserving of the Imamate and caliphate than the others because he had been appointed to this position by the Noble Prophet (s). This issue [of leadership] was so crucial that, despite the fact that Imam 'Ali ('a) knew that the caliphate and leadership was his legitimate right, he nonetheless acknowledged in action that the principle of establishing a government under any circumstances and by whatever means was obligatory. That is why he never opposed the caliphs of the time, seeking to weaken and sabotage their rule. Rather, he used to back them as a person who was second in line. He never withheld his goodwill and intellectual help, and hastened to help them whenever it was necessary.

His special and loyal companions were appointed to positions [of authority] by the caliphs, and they accepted these positions. The Imam ('a) never forbade them [from

taking part in the government]. Even his children took part in some wars. In some of his speeches he even alluded to the principle of the necessity to establish a government. In response to the Khajirites, who were saying, "There is no command except from Allah", he said, 'These words are true, but they are being used in the wrong way. It is true that command lies only with Allah, but these people say that (the function of) governance is only for Allah. The fact is that people must have a ruler, whether good or bad. Under his rule the believers perform good deeds while the unbelievers enjoy worldly blessings. By means of governance, the commands of Allah may be carried out, taxes can be collected so that enemies may be fought, roadways can be protected, and the right of the weak can be secured from the strong so that the virtuous may live in peace and be secure from the oppression of the wicked.'[1]

In any case, there are two possibilities. One is to say that the political, social, legal and penal laws of Islam pertained exclusively to the short period of the governments of the Noble Prophet (s) and Imam 'Ali ('a), and that they were not revealed for the present. The other is that Islam has an opinion concerning who the legal ruler or administrator of these laws should be at all times, even during the Age of Occultation. Because, it cannot be said that Islam has promoted the execution of these laws but has given no opinion regarding who the executor should be.

The theme of leadership and management of the nation was so important that the Divine Lawmaker of Islam, Himself, formally appointed the best and most competent

[1]. *Nahj al-Balagha*, sermon no. 40.

individuals, who were immune from every sin, to hold this position and determined their course of action.

As a rule, people who consider the theme of leadership and government to be a part of religion and a divine appointment should show particular attention and interest to this matter. If there is no access to an infallible leader, then effort must be made to select the most competent and upright people after the infallible Imam.

Belief in leadership and the Imamate produces movement, effort and a feeling of responsibility - not apathy, carelessness and submission to oppression and transgression.

It is surprising when a nation considers leadership to be part of their creed but ignores it in practice to such an extent that it seems as if intervening in this vital matter is an irrational deed and an unforgivable sin.

They recognize the position of leadership to be so sensitive and important that only the most perfect and competent individuals of mankind deserve to hold this position and no one else is fit to occupy it when the Imam is present. However, in practice they have ignored this position to which their destiny and the execution of the religious laws are attached and do not intervene in this vital matter in the least.

**Ibrahim Amini**
Qum, Sept.-Oct. 1981

# *PART ONE*

# *THE IMAMATE*

## DEFINITION OF IMAMATE

In Arabic, Imamate means guidance and leadership. In *Mufradat-e Raghib*, Imam is defined to mean any leader. In Arabic, an Imam is the community's leader and guide. They direct their attention to him and follow his thoughts and deeds.

The leader of congregational prayers is also called Imam because the congregation follows his actions, words and movements. They consider him to be their leader and guide on this spiritual ascension.

An Imam is sometimes the leader of a confined group of people, and at other times the leader of a whole nation. At times the Imamate has generality over all acts and movements; and at certain times it pertains to specific functions. Sometimes one has Imamate and leadership only in social and political affairs, and at other times in spiritual and ethical affairs as well as spiritual wayfaring. However, if one is called Imam in the absolute sense of the word, he should have Imamate and leadership in all affairs, in this world and the hereafter, corporeal and incorporeal, as well as social and spiritual. One is called Imam in the absolute and real sense of the word when he is the leader and guide of the people in acting upon the laws of the *Shari'ah* and divine precepts, manages a nation's social and political affairs according to divine edicts, carries out religious programs and directives, implements divine plans for reform, and applies Islam's instructions for ethics and worship.

In short, he himself has to be a perfect exemplar of religion and be a spiritual wayfarer in the heart of the straight path of the *shari'ah*. Such a person can be considered to be Imam, leader and guide of the people in the absolute and real sense of the word. He moves along the path of faith and spiritual wayfaring to God, as well as invites and guides the people to that path. Such an individual is the Imam and leader of the people. The people must follow him, and match their deeds and conduct with his acts and manner.

Actual leadership is necessary in the manifestation of Imamate. The word Imam and leader cannot be used to refer to all rulers. Rather, these terms can be applied in the real sense to a person who does not content himself with only issuing orders and leading. He himself should take the lead in doing good deeds and guiding the nation through [righteous] conduct and words. Therefore, in defining the true Imamate in its totality, it has to be said that Imamate means an all-embracing leadership and governance in all religious and worldly affairs.

Thus we understand that the definitions which Sunnis and some Shi'ah have given for Imamate and are found in books of *kalam* (Islamic Scholastic Theology) are incomplete and do not completely conform to its literal (or etymological) meaning. For example, some have defined Imamate by saying that Imamate means the caliphate and succession to the Noble Prophet (s) in safeguarding religion and protecting the domain of Muslims. Others

have said that Imamate means the general (or ordinary) leadership of people in religious and worldly affairs.[1]

Ibn Khaldun has written, "Caliphate means being the representative for the Owner of the Divine Law in safeguarding religion and administering the world. The holder of this office is called Imam and caliph."[2]

It has also been said that Imamate is overall, divine leadership on behalf of God's Prophet (s) in the people's religious and worldly affairs.[3]

In light of the foregoing information, it becomes clear that these kinds of definitions have not described the reality of the meaning of Imamate, which is the absolute and overall leadership of the nation in religious and worldly affairs. Rather, they have explained a fragment of various aspects of the Imam.

## THE CALIPHATE AND IMAMATE

Caliphate means succession to the Noble Prophet (s). The Prophet's successor is one who performs the Noble Prophet's duties and tasks in his absence.

Most Sunni scholars have considered the caliphate and Imamate to be synonymous and have said that caliphate and Imamate have one meaning. In places where one may be called the caliph, he may also be called the Imam.

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1. *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, vol. 8, p.345.
2. *Muqadamah Ibn Khaldun*, p. 211.
3. *Kifayat al-Muwahidin*, vol. 2, p. 75.

For example, Ibn Khaldun has written, "Caliphate means being the representative for the Owner of the Divine Law in safeguarding religion and administering the world. The holder of this office is called Imam and caliph."[1]

However, this is incorrect, because being in the position of leadership is a necessary condition for one to be an Imam. The Imam must act upon what he says and guide the people through his words and deeds. However, in the etymological meaning of the word caliph, it suffices that the caliph be chosen to substitute for the Noble Prophet (s) and perform his duties in his absence. Even if the caliph's actions do not conform to his words, he can still be called caliph according to this definition. Here we are not discussing the necessary conditions and qualities for the Prophet's successor; rather, our discourse revolves around determining the literal meanings of the words Imamate and caliphate.

Therefore, the Imamate and caliphate are not synonymous. In some instances, these two terms may simultaneously apply to one person. For instance, if the Prophet (s) appoints as his successor and deputy a distinguished and outstanding person who acts upon religious laws and commandments, this person is the leader of the people with respect to deeds, and the Prophet (s) puts him in charge of managing social and political affairs as well as safeguarding and protecting *Shari'ah* laws, such a person is really both the Imam and caliph. In reality, he holds the positions of Imamate and leadership with respect to enforcing religious laws and programs and is both the

[1]. *Muqadamah Ibn Khaldun*, p. 211.

Prophet's successor and vicegerent. He is the executor and protector of Divine Laws and precepts.

It is also possible for a person to be an Imam but not a prophet's successor (caliph). The Qur'an calls Abraham ('a) an Imam[1], even though he was not the successor of another prophet. Likewise, it is possible that a person acts upon all the religious laws and edicts, knows the true and esoteric meaning (*batin*) of Divine Laws, a number of believers follow him and emulate his deeds and words, but his leadership occurs during a time when he has not been appointed to be the successor or caliph of a prophet. Such a person can be called Imam and leader according to the etymological meaning of the word, but he is not a prophet's successor.

Sometimes caliphate may be applicable but Imamate is not. If the Noble Prophet (s) appoints someone to be his successor and deputy and entrusts some specific tasks for him to fulfill during his absence, such a person can be called the Prophet's successor. But, he will not be an absolute Imam and leader in all aspects.

Similarly, the people of a nation may select an individual from among themselves, entrust one of the prophet's tasks to him, and call him caliph according to their belief. Such an action would not be inappropriate according to the

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1. *"And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust.''* (*Qur'an* 2:124).
﴿ وَإِذِ ابْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

definition of this word, but absolute Imamate and leadership do not apply to him.

Overall, if the term Imam is applied to a person in the absolute sense of the word, and there are no restrictions in the circumstance of his Imamate, then it has to be said that he is an overall leader and guide, and that he has leadership in all spiritual and material affairs.

Imam Rida ('a) defines Imamate in the following way, 'The office of Imamate is too great, high and precise to be comprehended by human intellect, be understood through people's opinions, or be chosen by the people.'

God, the Exalted, stated the following after Abraham ('a) had attained the position of prophethood and had become the friend of the Beneficent God,

﴿ وَإِذِ ابْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

*"And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust'."*[1]

The above verse nullifies the Imamate of every oppressor and exclusively attributes it to the good and chosen ones.

Imam Rida ('a) states, 'Imamate means safeguarding religion and preserving the order of Muslims.'

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[1]. *Qur'an* 2:124.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE IMAMATE

It may be inferred from some of the traditions that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) was the Imam and leader of the people during the lifetime of the Noble Prophet (s). Many traditions on this topic can be found in the books of Islamic traditions. For example, the Noble Prophet (s) said, ‘With respect to Imam ‘Ali (‘a), God has told me, “Ali is the standard-bearer of guidance and the Imam of my friends.”’[1]

The Noble Prophet (s) said to Umm Salamah, ‘‘Ali is the leader of the Muslims and the Imam of the pious.’[2]

Such traditions prove that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) was vested with the Imamate and leadership during the lifetime of the Noble Prophet (s). He had followers during that time who emulated his deeds and conduct. Of course his Imamate during that time meant spiritual leadership and guidance, not that he was appointed as the caliph and Imam in the conventional sense (of the word).

According to these traditions, and other similar ones, Imam ‘Ali (‘a) was endowed with the Imamate and leadership during the (very) lifetime of the Noble Prophet (s), and the Noble Prophet (s) used to introduce him with this title. From the viewpoint of reason, there is no problem with this title being used for him at that time, and there is no need to say that these traditions apply to the time after the Noble Prophet (s) departed this (temporal) life.

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1. *Yanabi‘ al-Mawadah*, vol. 1, p. 234.
2. *Ibid*, p. 239.

## THE ORIGINS OF SHI'ISM

There are differences of opinion among scholars regarding when Shi'ism appeared. Some consider it to have first appeared after the sad demise of the Noble Prophet (s). They have said that the companions sought to select his successor and caliph when the Prophet of Islam (s) departed this life.

In this [undertaking], Muslims divided into three groups. The Helpers (*Ansar*) considered the caliphate to be their right and concocted reasons and proofs to validate their belief. The Emigrants (*Muhajirun*) deemed themselves to be more befitting of this office than other people, and devised evidence and arguments in their speeches and declamations. In the end, the Emigrants (*Muhajirun*) triumphed and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr.

The Hashemites, however, maintained that Imam 'Ali ('a) was not only more befitting of the caliphate, but also that it was his inalienable right. Some of the Prophet's companions like Salman Farsi, Abu Dhar Ghafari, Miqdad, 'Ammar Yasir, Bara' bin 'Azib and a number of others held this conviction. These people did not give their allegiance to Abu Bakr and instead supported Imam 'Ali ('a). It was during this time that Shi'ism came into being, and the group of people who sided with Imam 'Ali ('a) were called Shi'ah.

Ya'qubi has written, 'Some of the Helpers (*Ansar*) and Emigrants (*Muhajirun*) refused to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr and sided with 'Ali bin Abu Talib ('a). 'Abbas bin 'Abdulmuttalib, Fadl bin 'Abbas, Zubayr bin 'Awam, Khalid bin Sa'id, Miqdad, Salman Farsi, Abu Dhar

Ghafari, ‘Ammar bin Yasir, Bara’ bin ‘Azib and Abi bin Ka‘b were among them.’[1]

Sa‘d bin ‘Abdullah Ash‘ari has written, ‘After the sad demise of God’s Prophet (s), Muslims divided into three groups. One group sided with Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and came to be known as Shi`ah, the Helpers (*Ansar*) supported the caliphate of Sa‘d bin ‘Ibadah, and the Emigrants (*Muhajirun*) endorsed Abu Bakr.’[2]

On the other hand, some [historians] have said that Shi’ism appeared towards the end of ‘Uthman’s caliphate. They have said that until ‘Uthman’s time, there was no partisanship or grouping among Muslims. All of the Muslims shared the same ideas and beliefs. It was towards the end of ‘Uthman’s caliphate as a result of nepotism and the misappropriation of the public funds of the Muslims that some people became disgruntled and emerged as opponents [of the regime]. In order to unseat ‘Uthman and overthrow his government, they took recourse to Imam ‘Ali (‘a). They instigated a series of far-reaching propaganda [campaigns] in Islamic cities criticizing ‘Uthman’s government and thus rallying the people to the side of Imam ‘Ali (‘a).

They consider ‘Abdullah bin Saba to be one of the influential people of this group and have said that at this time a group of Muslims separated from the rest [of the Islamic community]. Thereupon, they formally and publicly supported ‘Ali (‘a). Thus, Shi’ism was founded and a group of people appeared who were called Shi‘ah

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1. *Tarikh Ya‘qubi*, vol. 2, p. 124.
2. Ash‘ari, *al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq*, p. 3.

and who were the supporters of ‘Ali’s Imamate. They held their own particular beliefs and opinions.

Others believe that Shi’ism emerged during the time of Imam ‘Ali’s caliphate. For instance, Ibn Nadim has written, ‘Talhah and Zubayr rebelled against Imam ‘Ali’s caliphate on the pretext of avenging ‘Uthman’s blood. Thereby they initiated the battle of Jamal, and Imam ‘Ali (‘a) entered into war with them. His supporters became known as Shi‘ah, and Imam ‘Ali (‘a) called them “my Shi‘ah”.[1]

Others have said that Shi’ism and its particular beliefs appeared after the battle of Siffin. A particular sect by the name of Khawarij (or Khajirites) emerged, who held new beliefs and opinions. They condemned Imam ‘Ali (‘a) for accepting the arbitration of Abu Musa al-Ashari. They even went so far as to declare him an unbeliever. They said there was no need to appoint a caliph and it was not necessary for the Imam to come from the tribe of the Quraysh. Rather, any person can be appointed to the caliphate.

The supporters of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) reacted to these aggressive beliefs. In opposition to what the Khawarij said, they maintained that Imam ‘Ali (‘a) was infallible and that the appointment of an Imam was one of the obligatory duties (*wajibat*). Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) supporters asserted that God’s Prophet (s) appointed Imam ‘Ali (‘a) to the caliphate and maintained that the Imam must come from the tribe of the Quraysh, specifically from the clan of the Bani Hashim (namely the Hashimites). Some say it

[1]. Ibn Nadim, *al-Fihrist*, p. 249.

was then that particular Shi'ite beliefs and opinions developed and came to the fore.

Some [historians] have said that Shi'ism came into existence after the heartrending event of Karbala, where Imam Husayn (‘a) was martyred together with his companions and young family members. These people say that before the event of Karbala the Muslims could not envisage that the (office of the) caliphate would readily and unhesitatingly commit such an atrocious genocide. They killed the beloved grandson of God's Prophet (s) and took his household captive in order to perpetuate their own leadership. Henceforth, Muslims understood that power corrupts. They learnt from this experience that they would not be able to defy the dictatorial government of the caliphate with forces and weapons. Thus, they entered the battlefield in an easier and more rational way. They said that the oppression suffered by the *Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)* left a deep impression on their spirits and thoughts. They believed that the caliphate and Imamate was the legitimate (and inalienable) right of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a), to whom they gravitated in order to learn the religious teachings and the *shari‘ah*. They began praising and eulogizing the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) whose rights had been violated. In summary, these people believed that the seedlings of Shi'ism were watered by the holy blood of Imam Husayn (‘a) and his youths. Henceforth, Shi'ism emerged and began to grow.

Some [historians] believe that Imami Shi'ism appeared and came into being during the time of Imam Sadiq (‘a). They say that it was during his time that the Imami sect came to have an independent code of law (*fiqh*), notable opinions and beliefs, and separated from the rest of the Muslims.

In opposition to all these beliefs, some [historians] hold that Shi'ism appeared during the lifetime of the Noble Prophet (s) himself and due to his guidance.

Sa'd bin 'Abdullah Ash'ari and Hasan bin Musa Nubakhti wrote, "The first sect which appeared in Islam is that of 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a). During and after the lifetime of the Noble Prophet (s), they were called Ali's Shi'ah. They were always well known for their gravitation to 'Ali ('a) and their belief in his Imamate. Miqdad bin Aswad, Salman Farsi, Abu Dhar Ghafari and 'Ammar bin Yasir were some of the Shi'ah [during the Noble Prophet's lifetime]. These were the first people to be called the Shi'ah of 'Ali ('a). In fact, the name Shi'ah was not a novel term. The terms Shi'ah of Abraham, Shi'ah of Moses and Shi'ah of Jesus had been used in the past too.[1]

One scholar wrote, 'The word Shi'ah appeared during the time of God's Prophet (s). This word was applied to the special followers of 'Ali bin Abu Talib ('a), such as: Miqdad bin Aswad, Salman Farsi, Abu Dhar Ghafari and 'Ammar bin Yasir.[2] Some of the Shi'ah scholars have upheld this same position and based their reasoning on the traditions.[3]

This is a brief account of the statements and beliefs concerning the origins of Shi'ism. However, it is not possible for us to enter into a detailed discourse and analysis of historical events here. What can be said briefly, and is connected to our discourse, is that the origins of

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1. *Al-Maqalat wa al-Firaq*, p. 15; *Firaq al-Shi'ah*, p. 39.
2. *Hadir al-'Alim al-Islami*, vol. 1, p. 188.
3. Such as the late Kashif al-Ghita' in his book *Asl al-Shi'ah wa Usulha*.

Shi'ism can be discussed in one of the following two ways:

***The first*** is that in light of the fact that the word Shi'ah has the meaning of follower, [it can be asked] from what time in history Imam 'Ali ('a) had special followers who emulated his deeds and conduct.

***The second*** is that we can look at Shi'ah as a distinguished community set apart from others by their belief in the immediate caliphate of Imam 'Ali ('a) [after the demise of the Prophet (s)]. In other words, Shi'ah in the real sense of the word are those who support 'Ali's ('a) Imamate and caliphate, and hold particular beliefs and opinions.

If we consider this question based upon the first way, it must be said that the origins of Shi'ism and the emergence of the Shi'ah occurred during the lifetime of God's Prophet (s). There is a special connection between the meanings of the words Shi'ah and Imam. The word Imam means leader and guide; while the word Shi'ah means follower. As has been said earlier, according to the apparent meaning of some traditions, Imam 'Ali ('a) was appointed to the station of Imamate during the lifetime of the Noble Prophet (s). Therefore, he must have had followers and disciples, namely the Shi'ah, from that very time.

Moreover, there are many traditions in Sunni and Shi'ite books which state that the Noble Prophet (s) used the word Shi'ah with respect to 'Ali's followers. For example, Ibn 'Abbas has said that when the verse '(And) lo! Those who believe and do good works are the best of created beings' was revealed, the Noble Prophet (s) told 'Ali ('a), 'This

verse pertains to you and your partisans (*Shi'ah*). You will be raised on the Day of Judgment with feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, and God will be pleased with you. Your enemies will be resurrected in a state of dissatisfaction and they will be cast by force into hell.'[1]

Jabir bin 'Abdullah said, 'We were sitting with the Noble Prophet (s) when 'Ali appeared. The Noble Prophet (s) said, "My brother has come." Then he turned to the K'aba, put his hand on it, and said, "I swear to God! 'Ali and his partisans (*Shi'ah*) will have salvation on the Day of Judgment."'[2]

'Ali bin Abu Talib said, 'God's Prophet (s) recited the verse "(And) lo! Those who believe and do good works are the best of created beings." Then he looked at me and said, "This verse was revealed about you and your partisans (*Shi'ah*). The appointed place where you will meet them is beside the Heavenly Fountain of Abundance (*Kawthar*) [in Paradise]. You will enter with shining faces and crowns of honor on your heads.'[3]

Such traditions indicate that during the time of the Noble Prophet (s), there were individuals who held Imam 'Ali ('a) in high esteem and emulated his deeds and conduct. He was their Imam and leader, and they were his followers and adherents. God's Prophet (s) himself has called them Shi'ah.

When you refer to the history books and examine the people's circumstances during the early days of Islam, you

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1. *Ghayat al-Miram*, vol. 3, p. 299.
2. *Ibid*.
3. *Ibid*, p. 300.

will find individuals from the time of the Noble Prophet (s) who had special reverence for Imam ‘Ali (‘a). Their love and affection for him was different from that of other people. These people followed ‘Ali (‘a) in jihad, in sacrifice in the way of religion, and in worship. They had accepted Islam based on clear judgment and discernment, and were among the loyal companions of the Noble Prophet (s). These were people the Noble Prophet (s) himself pronounced to be the Shi‘ah of ‘Ali. Therefore, the appearance of such traditions is irrefutable and they cannot be explained away by saying that the Noble Prophet (s) was giving news about the Shi‘ah of Imam ‘Ali (‘a) to come in the future.

It is worthy of mention that the existence of the Shi‘ah during the lifetime of the Noble Prophet (s) does not mean that during that era, there existed a distinguished sect separate from the rest of the Muslims. During the period of God’s Prophet (s), all Muslims were under one banner and there was no partisanship and sectarianism. Rather, what is meant is that during that time, there were individuals among Muslims who had special reverence for Imam ‘Ali (‘a) and who used to emulate him in deeds and conduct because he was more knowledgeable regarding the reality of Islam, he worshiped God out of complete insight and perfect faith, and he was a religious role model trained and instructed by the Noble Prophet (s).

However, we can also analyze Shi‘ism from the second viewpoint, that is to say the Shi‘ah were a distinguished community set apart from others by their belief in the immediate caliphate of Imam ‘Ali (‘a). It has to be said that the beginning of the emergence of Shi’ism in this sense occurred after the sad demise of the Noble

Prophet (s). That was when a group of Hashimites and Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) loyal companions refused to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr and broke away from the rest of the Muslims in opposition to Abu Bakr’s caliphate, siding with Imam ‘Ali (‘a).

It is clear that the circumstances of the Shi‘ah was not always the same. At times they were few in number, and later their numbers increased. Occasionally, they were many and then their numbers would decrease on account of certain occurrences. After the sorrowful death of God’s Prophet (s), Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) supporters were not that many, but the misconduct of the caliphs led to a daily increase in their numbers. This increase was notable when ‘Uthman ascended to the caliphate. His opponents increased on a daily basis because of his nepotism and embezzlement of public funds. Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) supporters and adherents increased to the extent that ‘Uthman was (virtually) deserted. Finally, ‘Uthman was killed and Imam ‘Ali (‘a) took up the reins of office. However, some people with vested interests could not bear Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) equitability and justice-seeking, and thus began the Battle of Jamal on that pretext of seeking vengeance from ‘Uthman’s killers. They lured some of Imam ‘Ali’s (‘a) apparent supporters to their side. Similarly, after the Battle of Siffin, some pseudo-religious people pretending to be pious broke ranks with Imam ‘Ali (‘a) for various reasons and went the opposite way.

The heart-rending event of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a) along with his companions and supporters also had profound effects on the appearance and growth of Shi’ism. It was as a result of this [sad and regrettable] event that the oppression suffered by the *Ahl*

*al-Bayt* (‘a) and the tyranny of the caliphate was proven to the Muslims. To the same extent that the despotic caliphate became abominable in the eyes of the people, the popularity of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) and the numbers of their adherents increased.

Imam Sadiq’s (‘a) teachings and his diligence in teaching and disseminating the Islamic sciences and *Shari‘ah* laws doubtlessly also had noteworthy effects on the scientific independence and popularity of the Shi‘ah. Certainly, the aforesaid causes together with hundreds of other events and factors all joined hands to bring the Shi’ite community to the present state. However, it is not true that Shi’ism in itself is an outcome of these causes. Rather, the seed of Shi’ism was planted during the time of the Prophet (s) by God’s Messenger (s) himself. This seed emerged, grew, and bore fruit as a result of many historical events and incidents that came to pass over the course of many centuries and eras.

## ABOUT THE WORDS ‘IMAM’ AND ‘CALIPH’

It is also important to point out that during the contentions that took place in the meeting of Saqifah of Bani Sa‘idah after the sad demise of God’s Prophet (s) the word Imam was not employed. No one talked about the Imamate. All discussions revolved around selecting the Prophet’s successor and a caliph. The phrases ‘Prophet’s successor’ and ‘rulers’ were much repeated. As far as this writer has investigated the Helpers (*Ansar*) were not saying that the people needed an Imam and that he should be selected

from among themselves. Nor were the Emigrants (*Muhajirin*) saying that the existence of an Imam for the Muslims was a necessity and that they were more deserving of the Imamate. Was this omission unintentional or deliberate? Did the Imamate call for conditions which they lacked and therefore they avoided talking about it? Or was the issue of 'Ali bin Abu Talib's ('a) Imamate and true leadership so indisputable that they could not make any claim to it?

In any case, on that day the discussion and contentions in the Saqifah revolved around who had the right to leadership and running the government. Who was capable of occupying this position? However, the issue of spiritual guidance and the Imamate were ignored. Nevertheless, after choosing a caliph, and after several people had occupied that position one after the other, the topic of the Imamate gradually came to the fore and even people like Mu'awiyah introduced themselves as Imams.

'Ali bin Abu Talib ('a) wrote to Mu'awiyah saying, 'O Mu'awiyah! You are one of those who was freed [from captivity], for whom the caliphate is forbidden (*haram*), and who lack the qualifications for the Imamate.'[1]

In this letter, 'Ali ('a) warned Mu'awiyah by writing, 'The Imamate of the Muslims calls for qualifications which you do not have. You are not the Prophet's (s) caliph, because the Prophet's (s) caliphate belongs to the legitimate Imam. You are not qualified for the Imamate because you do not have the necessary attributes.'

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[1]. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 114.

One of the points which deserves attention is that all of the sayings and writings of the Sunnis revolve around the Prophet's (s) caliph. History books always speak about the first, second, third and fourth caliphs, the Umayyad caliphs, and the 'Abbasid caliphs. But, the word '*Imam'* is rarely used. It is only with respect to 'Ali bin Abu Talib ('a) that the term '*Imam'* is employed at times. On the other hand, in the [Sunni] books of scholastic theology (*kalam*) there are discussions and arguments on '*the Imam'* and '*the Imamate'*.

The Shi'ah have used and [continue to] use the word '*Imam'* with respect to 'Ali bin Abu Talib ('a) and the rest of their spiritual leaders, but rarely use the word '*caliph'*. Only with respect to Imam 'Ali ('a) has the word '*caliph'* been employed at times. Even then, it is only when Imam 'Ali ('a) is juxtaposed with the first, second and third caliphs. Sunnis only paid heed to the Noble Prophet's (s) outward leadership and worldly government. They chose caliphs to occupy that very same worldly seat, thereby disregarding the issue of Imamate and spiritual leadership.

However, the Shi'ah considered spiritual perfection, virtues, and leadership along with inherent merit to be necessary qualifications of the Imam. The Shi'ah held the belief that such a distinguished individual has the right to be the leader and Prophet's successor. This is why you see that the theme of the Imamate has been hushed up among some groups, whereas the Shi'ah have taken the lead in this issue.

Ibn Nadim wrote, 'Ali bin Isma'il bin Maytham Tammar was the first person who discussed the Imamate sect and

wrote a book about the Imamate.'[1] In regard to Hisham bin Hakam, he wrote, 'He was one of the companions of Imam Ja'far Sadiq ('a) and a Shi'ah theologian (*mutakallim*). He opened discussions about the Imamate and refined the sect, and authored many books, one of which was about the Imamate.'[2]

Therefore, from the Shi'ite standpoint, the Imamate has [always] been a lofty position and of a high rank;hence, they have never paid much attention to using the word '*caliph'*, because in their opinion, the office of caliphate had been usurped by people who did not have the credentials for it. That is why the word '*caliph'* has lost its real value. Furthermore, none of the Shi'ite Imams—other than 'Ali ('a)—held the seat of the caliphate. Even that was only for a short period and after a long period of exclusion, in spite of the fact that in their point of view the caliphate is the right of the legitimate Imam. It is these same distinguished people who should occupy the position of leadership and government.

## IMAMATE IN THE QUR'AN

The word *imam* has been used in a number of instances in the Holy Qur'an. In all instances, [it has been employed] in its original connotation, namely a group of people who attract, mould and nurture people after themselves—a leader whom people emulate and whose words and conduct they follow.

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1. Ibn Nadim, *al-Fihrist,* p. 249.
2. *Ibid*, p. 249.

This leader can be a good person and a guide of good people, as the Holy Qur'an states [all emphasis added]:

﴿وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ ۝ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ﴾

*"And We gave him Isaac, and Jacob as well for a grandson, and each of them We made righteous. We made them **imams**, guiding by Our command, and We revealed to them the performance of good deeds, the maintenance of prayers, and the giving of zakat, and they used to worship Us."*[1]

It also says:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا﴾

*"And those who say, 'Our Lord! Grant us comfort in our spouses and descendants, and make us **imams** of the Godwary'."*[2]

A leader may also be bad and a leader of bad people, as the Holy Qur'an says with respect to the Pharaoh and his followers:

﴿ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِي فَأَوْقِدْ لِي يَا هَامَانُ عَلَى الطِّينِ فَاجْعَلْ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ۝ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ هُوَ وَجُنُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ

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1. *Qur'an* 21:72-73.
2. *Qur'an* 25:74.

﴿ فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يُنْصَرُونَ﴾

*"Pharaoh said, 'O [members of the] elite! I do not know of any god that you may have other than me. Haman, light for me a fire over clay, and build me a tower so that I may take a look at Moses' god, and indeed I consider him to be a liar!' He and his hosts acted arrogantly in the land unduly, and thought they would not be brought back to Us. So We seized him and his hosts, and threw them into the sea. So observe how was the fate of the wrongdoers! We made them **leaders [imams] who invite to the Fire**, and on the Day of Resurrection they will not receive any help."*[1]

It also says:

﴿ وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا أَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ ﴾

*"But if they break their pledges after their having made a treaty and revile your religion, then fight the **leaders [imams] of unfaith**—indeed, they have no [commitment to] pledges—maybe they will relinquish."*[2]

An Imam can also be a good book, as the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِيُنْذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

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1. *Qur'an* 28:38-41.
2. *Qur'an* 9:12.

*"Yet before it **the Book of Moses was a guide [imam]** and a mercy, and this is a Book which confirms it, in the Arabic language, to warn those who do wrong, and is a [bearer of] good news for the virtuous."*[1]

It also says:

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ ﴾

"*Indeed it is We who revive the dead and write what they have sent ahead and their effects [which they left behind], and **We have figured everything in a manifest Imam [book]**."*[2]

It can be inferred from the Holy Qur'an that every group of people, whether in the right or in the wrong, whether they are righteous or unrighteous, have an Imam from their own kind, and with whom they will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection. The Imam of the righteous will go forward and lead his followers to Paradise, whereas the Imam of the unrighteous will go forward and lead his followers to Hell. The Holy Qur'an says:

﴿يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ فَمَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ يَقْرَءُونَ كِتَابَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ۝ وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَى فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَى وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴾

*"The day We shall summon every group of people with their imam, then whoever is given his book in his right hand—they will read it, and they will not be wronged so*

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1. *Qur'an* 46:12.
2. *Qur'an* 36:12.

*much as a single date-thread. But whoever has been blind in this [world], will be blind in the Hereafter, and [even] more astray from the [right] way."*[1]

In the entire course of history, Prophets ('a) were the imams of righteous people, whereas leaders of unbelief and arrogance were guides for the unbelievers and the arrogant. This will continue in the same way until the Day of Resurrection.

It can, however, be deduced from the Holy Qur'an that the Imamate (leadership) of righteous and pious people will never be entrusted to unjust people:

﴿ وَإِذِ ابْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

*"And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust'."*[2]

A few issues can be inferred from the above mentioned verse:

A) To attain the seat of Imamate, essential aptitude and inner purity are necessary, and not every person can be accorded that high position. That is why God revealed that He was going to raise Prophet Abraham ('a) to the seat of the Imamate [only] after he ('a) had witnessed with his inner eye the heavenly and earthly dominions and had

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1. *Qur'an* 17:71-72.
2. *Qur'an* 2:124.

reached the level of certitude[1], after he had proven his merit when he was tested by means of Nimrod's fire[2], he had passed the test of being willing to sacrifice Ishmael[3], and other trials.

B) It can be deduced from the above mentioned verse that Abraham's Imamate was other than and higher than his prophethood, because it occurred towards the end of his life, when he definitely [already] held the position of prophethood. He was tested with difficult trials even though he was a prophet [already]. When his essential merit had been proven, he was promised that he would be chosen [for elevation] to the station of Imamate. Therefore, it becomes clear that his Imamate was higher than his prophethood.

It is worthy of note that although from the above mentioned verse it can be deduced that Abraham's special (or particular) Imamate was higher than his prophethood,

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1. *"Thus did We show Abraham the dominions of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who possess certitude."* (*Qur'an* 6:75)

2. *"They said, 'Burn him, and help your gods, if you are to do anything!' We said, 'O fire! Be cool and safe for Abraham!'"* (*Qur'an* 21:68-69)

3. *"So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son. When he was old enough to assist in his endeavour, he said, 'My son! I see in dreams that I am sacrificing you. See what you think.' He said, 'Father! Do whatever you have been commanded. If Allah wishes, you will find me to be patient.' So when they had both submitted [to Allah's will], and he had laid him down on his forehead, We called out to him, 'O Abraham! You have indeed fulfilled the vision! Thus indeed do We reward the virtuous! This was indeed a manifest test.' Then We ransomed him with a great sacrifice."* (*Qur'an* 37:101-107).

this does not mean that every Imam is higher than every prophet, because prophethood and Imamate both have levels and degrees. It is possible for the particular prophethood of some prophets (‘a) to be higher than the Imamate of some others. For instance, it is possible that the prophethood of the Seal of Prophets (s) is higher than and superior to the special (or particular) Imamate of Prophet Abraham (‘a).

C) It can be understood from the above mentioned verse that sometimes prophethood and Imamate exist simultaneously in one person, as they did in Prophet Abraham (‘a). Such a person is on the one hand in connection with the Lord of the Worlds and perceives realities by means of revelation, and on the other hand he is also chosen to fulfill the position of leadership and the Imamate with respect to deeds.

D) It can be inferred from the above mentioned verse that one of the conditions of Imamate is that one has to be immaculate and above committing sins and iniquities, because the verse denotes that whoever is unjust does not deserve attaining the position of Imamate. There is no doubt that whoever commits sins and iniquities has done injustice to their own soul, and therefore this person is considered to be unjust.

E) Before this discourse, Abraham (‘a) was already a prophet, charged with guiding the people and disseminating Divine Laws. Despite this, God the Exalted promised to raise him to the position of Imamate, leadership and a guide to the people. Thus, it can be understood that the Imam’s leadership and guidance is particular and differs from the guidance of prophets.

F) Imamate is a Divine promise and covenant which is determined and chosen by God alone. People have no authority over it, and their opinions and beliefs have no effect upon it.

God, in the Holy Qur'an, states:

﴿ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴾

*"And amongst them We appointed imams to guide [the people] by Our command, when they had been patient and had conviction in Our signs."*[1]

It can be deduced from this verse that attaining the position of Imamate calls for essential qualifications and aptitude. A person who is to attain the position of Imamate must be endowed with spiritual perfection and possess particular conditions. Two issues have been alluded to in the above mentioned verse:

First: An individual has the aptitude to attain the position of Imamate once he is patient and bears with hardships and adversities, copes with divine trials and tribulations, controls his [carnal] soul, does not commit sin, is resolute and steadfast in performing his duty and acting upon Divine orders. To summarize, this person must have self-restraint and control with respect to sins, and he has to be diligent in discharging obligatory [religious] duties.

Second: An individual will not attain the position of Imamate and will not be chosen by God to lead [and guide] people until he has reached the level of certainty and has come in contact with hidden realities and domains.

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[1]. *Qur'an* 32:24.

The eyes of his heart must have witnessed the spiritual realm and inner truths of the cosmos.

## THOSE VESTED WITH AUTHORITY (ULU'L AMR)

In the meeting held in the Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah after the sad demise of the Noble Prophet (s), as well as in other gatherings, debates and disputations that were held afterwards with respect to the Prophet's successor and caliph, the word Imam is rarely seen. However, the word authority (*amr*)[1], those vested with authority (*ulu'l amr*) and the one with a greater right to authority (*ahaq bi amr*) are continually repeated, and most of the debates and discussions pertain to the use of this word. That is why it is necessary to thoroughly and accurately examine it and extract its meaning and root.

The word *amr* has deep roots and was used by the Noble Prophet from the very beginning of his prophetic mission.

When the Noble Prophet (s) was instructed to invite the nearest of his kinsfolk to embrace Islam[2], he called them to a meeting and after they had eaten, said, 'Which one of you is willing to help me in this matter and be my brother, executor, and successor?' No one save 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) responded in the affirmative to the Noble

[1]. The Arabic word *amr* has many indications, some of which are order, command, matter and issue. *Ulu'l-amr* means those vested with authority. Thus, in the current discourse, *amr* has been rendered either as authority or power.

[2]. *"Warn the nearest of your kinsfolk."* (*Qur'an* 26:214)

Prophet's (s) invitation. In response to the Noble Prophet (s), 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) said, 'I will help you in this affair.' The Noble Prophet (s) said, ''Ali is my brother, executor, and successor. You should follow him.'[1]

One day the Meccan idolaters sent a message to the Noble Prophet (s) by way of Abu Talib ('a), saying, 'Stop speaking irreverently of our idols and have nothing to do with our gods. In return, we will do whatever you desire.' When Abu Talib ('a) delivered the message of the Quraysh, the Noble Prophet (s) stated, '[Even] if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left so that I relinquish this matter, I will never give it up until God makes it triumph or I lose my life in this way.'[2]

God's Prophet (s) had two appointments. One was that he received through revelation Divine Laws and commandments and communicated them to Muslims without making any changes and without any insertions or deletions. Thus, he would never trespass Divine commands and directives nor say anything of his own accord. His statements were identically matching with the Divine Laws.

The Noble Prophet's (s) other appointment was the governance and authority over the Muslims. God's Prophet (s) was duty bound to execute the Divine Laws and precepts, and govern the Muslim society by formulating and enforcing Islamic social and political laws. He was obligated to endeavor to rectify the people's affairs of this world and the Hereafter. Therefore, the

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1. *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 1, pp. 542-543.
2. *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 1, p. 545.

Islamic government was under his control and it was incumbent upon the people to obey his governmental laws and directives.

God's Prophet (s) governed the Islamic society through the very authority which was entrusted to him by God the Glorified. He issued orders for the advancement and prominence of Islam and Muslims and in order to establish social order and security.

Therefore, the Noble Prophet's position of authority and governance was part and parcel of his prophethood. It can be said that what is meant by the word '*amr*', to which God's Prophet (s) alluded at the beginning of his [Divine] invitation, is this very same governance and authority, which was one component of his prophethood. When the Noble Prophet (s) was alive, authority over the Muslims belonged exclusively to him, and all of the Muslims acknowledged this and were obedient to his orders. However, after his sad demise, his authority became the center of dispute and contention.

After the people had sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr, Abu 'Ubaydah told 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), 'For the time being, leave this matter to Abu Bakr. If you were alive after him, [you should take charge of it because] you deserve this position more than anyone else. Your virtue, piety, and intelligence are indisputable, and you preceded everyone in [embracing] Islam. Your honorable lineage and your family ties with God's Prophet (s) gives you superiority.' 'Ali ('a) said, ''O community of Emigrants (*Muhajirun*)! For God's sake do not take Muhammad's leadership and governance from his household, and do not deprive his family of that position. I swear by God, O Emigrants

(*Muhajirun*), that we have a greater right to this position. We, the *Ahl al-Bayt*, have a greater right to the caliphate.'[1]

Mu'awiyah told Ibn 'Abbas, 'There was once a time when we neither hoped for Divine reward nor feared Divine punishment. Despite the fact that we outnumbered you, we still did not oppress, subjugate and enslave you. We did not usurp any position from you until God chose his Messenger from your clan. That is when 'Ali preceded us and believed in God's Prophet. He disliked our participation and prevented God's Prophet from paying attention to us, until the Noble Prophet ('a) attained power, became our and your leader, and gained authority. However, after the death of God's Prophet ('a) the issue of government and leadership was assigned to both of us. But, our candidate had precedence over 'Ali ('a) because he was older, and thus he took the reins of government and leadership.'[2]

Mu'awiyah told Ali ('a) and others, 'This matter [i.e. government] will be usurped from you, and this position will be taken from you.'[3]

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) wrote to his brother saying, 'The Quraysh did not observe my family ties with God's Prophet (s). They opposed me and usurped my cousin's government.'[4]

Imam Hasan ('a) wrote the following to Mu'awiyah, 'When the Noble Prophet (s) departed this temporal life,

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1. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 29.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 47.
3. *Ibid*, p. 48.
4. *Ibid*, p. 75.

the Arabs disputed over his government. The Quraysh told the people that they were the Prophet's relatives and kinsfolk and that therefore, it was not permissible for others to argue and contend with them for the Prophet's government. The Arabs conceded this right to the Quraysh, accepted their argument, and submitted to them.'[1]

While delivering a speech at the Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah, 'Umar said, 'Who has the audacity to dispute with us over Muhammad's government and legacy when we are his relatives and kinsmen? Only one who dares [to persist] in a false claim, commits sins, or exposes his life to destruction [has such audacity].'[2]

It can be inferred from these statements and similar ones that '*amr*' means government and leadership. It can be said that '*amr*' denotes command. The one who holds the reins of power is called 'the one vested with authority (*ulu'l amr*)', because he has the right of leadership and the right to encourage for what is right and forbid what is wrong. His directives are binding and must be carried out.

Likewise, it can be said that '*amr*' denotes position and work. 'The one vested with authority (*ulu'l amr*)' is the person who controls the nation's social affairs and has leadership over the people.

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1. *Maqatil al-Talibin*, p. 35.
2. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 25.

## THE PROPHET'S (S) DUTIES

A study of the history books and the social life of the Muslims during the early days of Islam, as well as investigation into the Noble Prophet's (s) conduct and comportment, reveal that from the time that Muslims during the early days of Islam constituted a population and appeared as a nation or specific group, they were to a larger or lesser extent confronted by the polytheists. They considered God's Prophet (s) to be their leader, commander, and the one vested with authority (*ulu'l-amr*). They obeyed his orders and directives. Discharging and appointing governors and army commanders, as well as designating judges, apportioning public property, giving orders for war and peace, and in general, managing the social affairs of the Muslims were all in the hands of the Noble Prophet (s). The government and management of the nation's social affairs were a part of the Noble Prophet's (s) duty. Muslims were obedient and submissive to him, and no one had any objections.

Besides the position of leadership, he received Divine Laws and injunctions through revelation from God, the Exalted, and communicated them to the people. In other words, the administration of the government, the management of the Muslim's affairs, eminence in knowledge, prophethood, spiritual leadership, and the guidance of the people were all concentrated in one place during the Prophet's (s) lifetime. That is to say, on the one hand, the Noble Prophet (s) received Divine Laws and injunctions from God, the Exalted, and guided the people by way of knowledge and help from the unseen. On the other hand, he was charged with executing the Divine

Laws among the Muslims. By executing these laws he struggled to advance and promote Islam and Muslims as well as establish social order, security and general welfare. These two responsibilities were centralized in God's Prophet (s). His prophethood consisted of two positions. He both received the Divine Laws and also ensured the execution of these laws.

## THE BREAKDOWN OF TWO POSITIONS

The people who intended to succeed the Noble Prophet (s) after his sad demise did not claim prophethood, being in touch with the Lord of the Worlds or receiving revelation;nor did they claim spiritual leadership and Imamate. They did not perceive in themselves [the necessary and prerequisite] knowledge, piety and infallibility needed to introduce themselves as Imams and the spiritual leaders of the people, or to take charge of religious guidance and instruction. They had nothing at all to do with these kinds of issues.

Thus, they overlooked the Noble Prophet's (s) position of guidance, leadership, infallibility, and knowledge. They concentrated their attention on his administration of the government, his apparent power, and his headship. They claimed that before anything else, even before the burial of the Noble Prophet (s), they had to choose a ruler or governor for the Muslims on the pretext that the Muslim's social affairs and order would be disrupted and shattered if they remained without a head of state.

In order to gain the position of head of state and ruler, each of them tried to show that he possessed some superiority, even though none of them actually had the merit to be the Islamic caliph. The Emigrants (*Muhajirun*) said that the caliph should come from among themselves since they were the Prophet's (s) fellow townsmen, and because they had left their homeland. The Helpers (*Ansar*) said that they had a greater right to the caliphate because they had welcomed [and granted asylum] to the Noble Prophet (s) and the Emigrants (*Muhajirun*). One said, 'I was with the Noble Prophet (s) in the cave of Thur.' Another person said, 'Since you lead the congregational prayer during the Prophet's illness, you should be the caliph.' Someone else said, 'The caliph should come from the Quraysh.' One person said, ''Ali ('a) is not fit for the caliphate because he is young and jovial.' The arguments of these companions were of this sort. No one argued that the Prophet's (s) successor should be thoroughly knowledgeable about the Islamic laws, possess the ability to guide the Islamic community, lead the community towards spiritual perfection, and solve scientific and social problems.

No one said that the Noble Prophet (s) governed the people under the title of Islam. Therefore, his successor has to have perfect knowledge of the Holy Qur'an: its abrogating (*nasikh*) and abrogated (*mansukh*) verses, its definitive (*muhkam*) and ambiguous (*mutashabih*) verses, the situation when the verses were revealed (*sha'n nuzul*), their interpretation (*tafsir*), and the esoteric interpretation (*ta'wil*). No one argued that, 'God's Prophet (s) was aided by infallibility (*'ismat*). He was immune from all kinds of sins, forgetfulness, and even petty violations. Thus, he was

able to be the leader and exemplar for the people in words and deeds. His successor too should have a background free from any misconduct. He should never have prostrated to other than God. He should be infallible and immune from all kinds of sins, forgetfulness, and petty violations. Then, he can be the leader and exemplar for the people in words and deeds.' No such statements were made at all. Rather, the opposite was said and done. The only people, who made such statements after the sad demise of the Noble Prophet (s), were Imam 'Ali ('a) and his supporters.

After the Noble Prophet's demise, the Helpers (*Ansar*) gathered around Sa'd bin 'Ibadah. He spoke to them and said, 'O [community of] Helpers! You take precedence over everyone in Islam. You have virtues which others lack. God's Prophet (s) had been preaching amongst his tribe for many years. But, only a few people had faith. And, they did not even have the power to defend him. Then, God endeared you to him. You believed [in his divine message] and defended him and his companions. You fought his enemies until people, willingly or unwillingly, submitted [to Islam]. It was through your swords that the Arabs submitted [to Islam] and God's Prophet (s) attained power and strength. The Noble Prophet (s) was pleased with you at the time of his death. Therefore, hold this matter (i.e. the caliphate) firmly, because you have a greater right to it.'[1]

When the Emigrants (*Muhajirun*) heard about the Helper's meeting, 'Umar and Abu Bakr hurried to the Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah. Abu Bakr made a long speech, in which he

[1]. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 22.

said, 'When the Prophet (s) invited idolaters to Islam and monotheism, they did not consent to leave their forefathers' creed. The first group to attain this virtue [of embracing Islam and monotheism] were the Emigrants, who endured hardships and adversities. They were not afraid of being only a few. They bore persecution and harassment and did not abandon their faith. The Emigrants were the first people to worship God and believe in Him and the Messenger (s). And, they are the Prophet's companions and tribesmen. For this reason, they have a greater right to his rule his government. Whoever argues and disagrees with them in this regard has abused their right and is an oppressor.'

Then he addressed the Helpers and said, 'I do not deny your virtues and services [to Islam]. After the Emigrants, you have superiority over everyone else. Therefore, let us be the emirs and you the viziers. We will not do anything without consulting you, and nothing will be done without you.'[1]

In response to Habab bin Mandhar, 'Umar said, 'I swear to God that the Arabs will not be satisfied to delegate authority and the government to you, because Muhammad (s) was not from you. The Arabs will not approve of bestowing this matter (i.e. government) to anyone besides the Prophet's tribesman and those vested with authority (*ulu'l amr*). We have such a strong argument against our opponents. Who can argue and

[1]. *Ibid*, p. 24.

disagree with us, his tribesmen, in regard to the government and Muhammad's heritage?'[1]

Bashir bin Sa'd Ansari said, 'Muhammad came from the Quraysh. Therefore, his tribesmen have a greater right to his heritage and government. I swear by God that I will not argue and disagree with them in regard to this matter (i.e. government).'

After a series of long discussions, arguments and counter-arguments, Abu Bakr cleverly ended the discussions by saying, 'Put your differences aside. I am only your well-wisher. I recommend that you swear allegiance either to 'Umar or Abu 'Ubaydah.' 'Umar responded, 'You are more worthy of leadership than us, because you take precedence over us with regards to companionship and friendship with God's Prophet (s). In addition, you are financially better off than us, you were with the Noble Prophet (s) in the cave of Thur, and you led the prayer, the most distinctive pillar of Islam, in place of the Noble Prophet (s). Who then, could aspire to take precedence over you and take control of the government? Give me your hand so that I may swear allegiance to you.' Without hesitation, Abu Bakr extended his hand [towards 'Umar], but Bashir bin Sa'd Ansari preceded 'Umar and paid allegiance to Abu Bakr first. After him, 'Umar pledged allegiance. Then, the rest of the people gathered and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr.

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[1]. *Ibid*, p. 26.

## NO CONTROVERSY OVER KNOWLEDGE AND INFALLIBILITY

If one refers to the history books and carefully examines the discussions, arguments and debates which took place among the companions after the demise of the Noble Prophet (s) in regards to selecting his successor and the leader of the Muslims, it will become clear to him that the attention of the companions was directed at the Noble Prophet's (s) apparent government. The only thing they witnessed in the lofty position and office of prophethood was the outward aspect of administration. When they saw God's Prophet (s) ruling among them, they conjectured that his reign was like that of all the other [temporal] governments without any qualifications or restrictions. They paid no heed to the Prophet's (s) essential perfections, knowledge of the unseen and divine impeccability. That is why all aspirants to that position only argued that they had helped and played a role in gaining this power. Therefore, they said it was their right to take over this government.

The Emigrants said that government was their right because they had believed [in Islam] before everyone else, and that they had migrated together with the Noble Prophet (s). The Quraysh said that they had a greater right to the caliphate because the Noble Prophet (s) was from their clan. One of them said the caliphate was his right because he was with the Noble Prophet (s) in the cave of Thur. The Helpers said they should take control of the government because they had given the Noble Prophet (s) and the Emigrants shelter and asylum. Another group said that power had to be shared between the Emigrants and the

Helpers. They said that each group should select a leader because they had both participated in the establishment and confirmation of the Noble Prophet's (s) government.

The virtues which aspirants to the caliphate were enumerating for themselves or those that other people concocted for them were of the aforesaid kinds. In so far as this writer has researched, I have not come across one instance where someone said that he had a greater right to the caliphate and to rule the Islamic government because he was more knowledgeable about the religious laws and the *shari'ah,* or that he did not err when speaking or when enforcing divine injunctions, or that he possessed virtues and essential perfection.

## 'ALI'S ('A) LOGIC

Imam 'Ali ('a) and his children believed and argued that knowledge and piety were necessary qualifications for the caliph and successor of the Prophet (s). When Imam 'Ali ('a) was brought before Abu Bakr and told to pay allegiance, he said, 'O [community of] Emigrants! Do not transfer Muhammad's government and leadership from his household to your households. Do not deprive his *Ahl al-Bayt* of this position and office. O [community of] Emigrants! I swear by God that we are more worthy and qualified for this position than anyone else. We are his household. When there is among us a reciter of the Holy Qur'an, one well versed in the religion and traditions of God's Prophet (s), and one who can manage and govern the nation, prevent depravities and distribute the public

wealth with justice, we are more competent for government and leadership. By God, such an individual presently exists among us. Do not follow your carnal desires, because you will be misled and stray from what is correct.'[1]

When Imam 'Ali ('a) and a number of people from the Bani Hashim tribe were brought before Abu Bakr and told to pay allegiance, the Imam ('a) said, 'I have a greater right to succeed the Noble Prophet (s), during his lifetime and after, because I am his executor and vizier. I am the guardian of his secrets, the repository of his knowledge, the most veracious, and the great discerner. I was the first person to believe in God's Prophet (s) and affirm his message. In jihad against the idolaters, I was able to pass the trial better than all of you. I am more knowledgeable than all of you with respect to the Book and the traditions (*Sunna)*. I have more knowledge of the religion than any one of you, and I am more aware of the consequences of affairs. I am more eloquent in speech and more compassionate in deeds. Why then do you argue with me in regard to the matter of government?'[2]

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) said, 'The one who has a greater right to this matter (i.e. government) is the one who is stronger in the management of the nation and is more knowledgeable about divine orders and commands.'[3]

Imam Hasan ('a) said, 'The Imams are from us, and no one other than us has the competency to succeed the Noble

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1. *Ibid*, p. 29.
2. *Ihtijaj*, vol. 1, p. 73.
3. *Nahj al-Balagha*, p. 247.

Prophet (s). God in the Holy Qur'an and the Noble Prophet (s) in the *Sunnah* consider us to have a greater right to that position. Knowledge is with us, and we are the people of knowledge. All the knowledge of prophethood is safeguarded in us. All the events that will occur until the Day of Resurrection and all the laws, even those pertaining to scratches on people's bodies, were dictated to 'Ali ('a) by the Noble Prophet (s) and are in our hands.'[1]

Imam 'Ali ('a) recited this verse:

﴿ وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مُلْكَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴾

*"Their prophet said to them, 'Allah has appointed Saul as king for you.' They said, 'How can he have kingship over us, when we have a greater right to kingship than him, as he has not been given ample wealth?' He said, 'Indeed Allah has chosen him over you, and enhanced him vastly in knowledge and physique, and Allah gives His kingdom to whomever He wishes, and Allah is All-bounteous, All-knowing'."*[2]

Then he said, 'There is an example for you to follow in these verses. The lesson is that you should know that God, the Exalted, has assigned the caliphate and leadership after the Prophets to their children. God, the Exalted, preferred

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1. *Ihtijaj*, vol. 2, p. 287.
2. *Qur'an* 2:247.

and favored Saul over the rest of the people because he had chosen him and granted him more knowledge and bodily strength. Do you imagine that God, the Exalted, has preferred Bani Umayyah over Bani Hashim and that Mu'awiyah has more knowledge and bodily strength than me?'[1]

'Ali ('a) also said:

'O God! Thou knowest that I do not pursue the caliphate so that I may rule over the nation or to add to my wealth. My purpose is to uphold the signs of Your religion and to improve Your cities so that the oppressed among Your creatures may live in safety, and so that Your forsaken commands may be established.'[2]

In a letter to Mu'awiyah, 'Ali ('a) wrote, 'The most eligible for the seat of government is the one who is nearest to the Noble Prophet (s), the most knowledgeable about God's Book and religion, the one who preceded everyone else in embracing Islam, the one who fought more staunchly in the way of God, and the one who is stronger than everyone else in performing the duties of leadership.'[3]

## THE ADMISSIONS OF THE OPPONENTS

Yes, only 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) and his children paid heed to essential perfections, spiritual virtues, piety, and

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1. *Ihtijaj*, vol. 1, p. 173.
2. *Nahj al-Balagha*, sermon no. 130.
3. *Sharh Ibn al-Hadid*, vol. 3, p. 210.

knowledge; that is why they considered themselves more eligible to assume the office of caliphate and Imamate. Imam 'Ali's ('a) virtues and perfections were so indisputable that even his opponents admitted to them.

For instance, Abu 'Ubaydah told Imam 'Ali ('a), 'Cede this matter to Abu Bakr for the time being. If you were alive after him, your eligibility to rule is well established. Your virtues, piety, knowledge, and intelligence are indisputable, and you preceded everyone in [embracing] Islam. Your honorable lineage and ties with God's Prophet (s) are not hidden from anyone.'[1]

When 'Umar was on his deathbed, he told Imam 'Ali ('a), 'I do not appoint you to the seat of caliphate because I know you are avid for it, despite the fact that I know if you are elected to the caliphate, you are more eligible to act upon the criterion of truth and the straight path… O 'Ali! Perhaps the people will recognize and observe your right, essential superiority and family ties with God's Prophet (s), and pay attention to your God given knowledge, knowledge of religious jurisprudence, and piety, thereby selecting you to the caliphate. If you attain this position, fear God and do not make the people of the Bani Hashim dominate over the people.'[2]

Zafar bin Qays told his tribesmen, 'People in Medina swore allegiance to Imam 'Ali ('a) without any fear of sinning, because he was well versed in the Holy Qur'an and considered the caliphate to be his right.'[3]

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1. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 29.
2. *Ibid*, p. 43.
3. *Ibid*, p. 110.

In a letter to Imam ‘Ali (‘a), Mu‘awiyah wrote, ‘I do not deny your Islamic virtues and family ties with the Noble Prophet (s).’[1]

Ibn ‘Abbas said, ‘One day I was with ‘Umar. He took a very deep breath, at which I said, “Your deep breath speaks of a deep sorrow and much worry.” He said, “Yes. I swear by God that I am thinking about whom I should hand the caliphate over to when I depart this life. Perhaps you consider your friend ‘Ali more eligible than others for the caliphate?” I said, “Yes. ‘Ali (‘a) has a greater right to the caliphate considering his jihad, his record in Islam, and his family ties with the Noble Prophet (s).” He said, “You are right, but he is witty and jovial.”’[2]

One day ‘Umar told Ibn ‘Abbas, ‘I swear by God that if your friend (‘Ali (‘a)) attains the caliphate, he will compel the people to act upon God’s Book and the Noble Prophet’s *sunnah*, and bring them into the bright and straight path of piety.’[3]

During the last days of his caliphate, ‘Umar told K‘ab al-Ahbar, ‘I want to designate someone for the caliphate, because I think my death is near. Tell me your opinion regarding ‘Ali bin Abi Talib? Don’t you think this matter exists in your books?’ K‘ab al-Ahbar said, ‘In my opinion, ‘Ali bin Abi Talib is not a good choice for the caliphate, because he is firm and fanatic regarding religion. He does not overlook anyone’s sin, is intolerant of offences, and

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1. *Ibid*, p. 121.
2. *Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, vol. 3, p. 106.
3. *Ibid*, p. 107.

does not act according to his own opinion. This kind of morality is incompatible with statesmanship.'[1]

One day 'Umar and the Prophet's companions were seated in the Mosque. 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) joined them. One of the companions started to speak adversely about him when he stood up to leave, and said, 'He is proud and egotistic.' 'Umar said, 'A person like 'Ali has the right to be proud. If it were not for his sword, Islam would not have been established. He is the most knowledgeable with respect to juridical affairs. His background in Islam, magnanimity and greatness are incontrovertible.' Another of the companions asked, 'Then why did you not select him for the caliphate?' 'Umar said, 'He was deprived of the caliphate because he was young and partial towards the children of 'Abdulmuttalib ('a).'

At the time of his death, 'Umar called 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), 'Uthman, Talhah, Zubayr, Sa'd bin Abi Wiqas and 'Abdulrahman bin 'Auf. He turned to them and said, 'It seems that all of you are waiting to assume the caliphate after my death.' Zubayr responded, 'Yes. You attained the caliphate, and we are not inferior to you.' 'Umar said, 'Would you like me to describe the state of each one of you?' They said, 'Go ahead.' He enumerated the defects of each of them, until he came to 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a). He addressed him and said, 'O 'Ali! You are eligible for the caliphate, but the problem is that you are witty and jovial. If you assume the caliphate, you will

[1]. *Ibid*, p. 115.

compel the nation to act upon what is right and lead them to a bright path.'[1]

'Umar used to say, 'Ali is better than all of us in juridical affairs.'[2]

Sa'id bin Masib narrated that 'Umar said, 'I pray that I shall not face a problem when 'Ali is not present.'[3]

Imam 'Ali ('a) asked Abu Bakr, 'What are the necessary qualities for a nation's ruler and leader?' Abu Bakr responded, 'He should want the best for the nation, act upon his promises, be honest, well mannered, just and equitable. He should be well versed in the Holy Qur'an, the Prophet's *Sunnah* and juridical affairs. He should be ascetic and indifferent to the world, protect and defend the oppressed, and look upon those who are family or unrelated in the same way when dispensing justice.' Then he became quiet. Imam 'Ali ('a) said, 'Having precedence in [embracing] Islam and having family ties with the Noble Prophet (s) is also a condition.' Abu Bakr said, 'Yes. Preceding everyone in [embracing] Islam and having family ties with the Noble Prophet (s) are also necessary qualifications for the leader.' 'Ali ('a) said, 'O Abu Bakr! Before God, who possesses these qualities, you or me?' Abu Bakr responded, 'You have these qualities.'[4]

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1. *Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, vol. 1, p. 62.
2. *Tabaqat*, vol. 2, p. 339; *Manaqib Kharazmi*, p. 92.
3. *Tabaqat*, vol. 2, p. 339.
4. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 34.

'Umar often said, 'Women are incapable of bearing a person like 'Ali. If there had been no 'Ali, 'Umar would have perished.'[1]

## THE CALIPHS ADMITTED TO NOT BEING INFALLIBLE

Abu Bakr and 'Umar did not claim to be infallible. Moreover, they even admitted their essential flaws, the inadequacy of their knowledge and their susceptibility to error. Several examples follow.

In one of his sermons, Abu Bakr said, 'O people! I succeeded the Noble Prophet (s) not because I am better than you. I would have loved that some of you had occupied this position rather than me. If you want to reproach me, know that God protected His Prophet from mistakes through revelation. But, I am deprived of revelation and infallibility. I am an ordinary human being like you. Follow me when you see me moving on the right path; and, guide me to the straight path when you see me straying from it. Know that I have a devil which sometimes overpowers me. Avoid me when you see that I am angry.'[2]

Elsewhere, Abu Bakr said, 'O people! I rule over you, but I am not better than you… I follow the Noble Prophet (s) and am not a heretic (or innovator in the Prophet's

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1. *Manaqib Kharazmi*, p. 81.
2. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 34.

*Sunnah*). If what I do is correct, help me. If I stray from what is right, oblige me to come to the straight path.'[1]

Mu'awiyah told Abu Hurayrah, 'I do not think I am more worthy of leadership than 'Ali.'[2]

Most Muslims did not understand the depth of the meaning of prophethood during the early days of Islam. All of their attention was directed at the outward aspects of the Noble Prophet's (s) government. That is why they did not believe there were any necessary conditions or qualifications for the assumption of the office of the caliphate and succession to the Noble Prophet (s). Some considered insignificant points to bring superiority, such as: being Helpers (*Ansar*) or Emigrants (*Muhajirun*), being older, or supporting the Noble Prophet (s). However, the succession of God's Prophet (s) calls for essential merit. God, the Exalted, appoints whoever He deems eligible to this position. This fallacious conjecture [that succeeding the Noble Prophet (s) does not call for essential merit and qualifications] always existed in the minds of people. That is why during his lifetime some people told him that they would assist him on the condition that they could succeed him as the ruler after his death. In response, the Noble Prophet (s) always said, 'The issue of government is in God's hands. He appoints whomever He deems eligible to the position of authority and Imamate.'

Muhammad bin Muslim bin Shahab Zuhri said, 'God's Prophet (s) visited the clan of Bani 'Amir and invited them to embrace Islam. A man called Bihrah said, 'I swear to

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1. *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 2, p. 244.
2. *Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasat*, vol. 1, p. 128.

God, if this youth comes under my control, I will prevail over the Arabs with his help.' Then he said to Muhammad (s), 'If we follow you and help you in the matter (*amr*) of government until you prevail over your enemies, do you promise that we can rule the governement after you?' God's Prophet (s) responded, 'The matter (*amr*) of government is in God's hands. He will grant it to whomever He desires.' That man responded, 'Should we protect you with our chests for others to inherit your government?'[1]

In any case, it is necessary to discuss the root and etymon of the word '*amr*', a word which has been mentioned repeatedly.

## THOSE VESTED WITH AUTHORITY IN THE QUR'AN

'Those vested with authority' (*ulu'l amr*) has continually been a subject of discussion among the Noble Prophet's companions. It stems from this verse in the Holy Qur'an.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آَمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآَخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا﴾

*"O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority (ulu'l amr) among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah*

[1]. *Tarikh Tabari*, vol. 1, p. 556; *Sirah Ibn Hisham,* vol. 2, p. 272.

*and the Apostle, if you have faith in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome."*[1]

The above verse indicates that it is binding (*wajib*) upon believers to obey three persons: the Exalted God, the Noble Prophet (s), and those vested with authority (*ulu'l amr*).

## GOD

Obeying God, the Exalted, is one of the dictates of reason and conscience. Every person's wisdom attests to the fact that mankind should be humble and submissive to the Divine Laws and injunctions and act upon them unquestioningly, because God the Exalted is the creator and owner of all that exists. He has complete authority over everything. All of creation must fulfill whatever duty He assigns to them. People do not directly receive Divine Laws and injunctions. Rather, they are sent through Prophets ('a). A Prophet ('a) is not a legislator and lawmaker. He does not make any laws for people himself. Rather, he receives all religious laws and injunctions through revelation, and he communicates to people what he receives from God.

In the Holy Qur'an, God says:

[1]. *Qur'an* 4:59.

﴿ وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَى ۞ مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَى ۞ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى ۞ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى ۞ عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى ۞ ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَى ۞ وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى ﴾

*"By the star when it sets: your companion has neither gone astray, nor gone amiss. Nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him], taught him by One of great powers, possessed of sound judgement. He settled, while he was on the highest horizon."*[1]

Therefore, it is binding (*wajib*) upon people to obtain religious laws from the Prophet ('a) and act upon them in obeying God. This is obligatory (*wajib*) according to the dictates of reason and the Holy Qur'an.

## THE PROPHET (S)

The previous verse signifies that obeying God's Messenger (s) is also binding (*wajib*) and necessary. Obedience to the Noble Messenger (s) has been mentioned alongside obedience to God, the Exalted, and therefore has to be other than it. This reveals that the Noble Prophet (s) also had particular laws and injunctions, and that is why it is compulsory (*wajib*) to obey him. Besides receiving and communicating the Divine Laws, God's Messenger (s) was also charged with enforcing them among the Muslims. He was duty bound to forestall transgressions, establish social safety and order, prepare the means for the

1. *Qur'an* 53:1-7.

welfare and prosperity of the nation, and strive for the advancement and greatness of Islam and Muslims. In general, he had been entrusted with the duty to manage in the best manner the Muslims' social and political affairs by executing the Islamic social laws. In other words, God, the Exalted, had entrusted him with the duty of ruling and governing the Muslims.

Governing the Muslims necessitated that he issue decrees and directives. It was also important that he issue orders according to what was in the best interests of the society, the various needs that came up, and in connection with the changing events and occurrences, such as: designating governors and judges, issuing orders for jihad and defense [of Islamic lands], appointing and dismissing army commanders, communicating specific directives to ensure victory in jihad, securing the nation's budget, employing agents and workers, establishing order and discipline in the Islamic system of government, making and instituting necessary laws within the limits of the divine injunctions, and in general issuing every directive which he deemed necessary for the administration of the nation.

We call these kinds of laws 'leadership directives.' The Noble Prophet (s) had the right to issue any decrees that he deemed expedient and necessary for the society. It is with respect to these same laws that the Holy Qur'an, in the former verse, has placed the Noble Prophet (s) alongside God, the Exalted, and has considered obeying him to be obligatory (*wajib*).

Furthermore, there are also other verses in the Holy Qur'an which deem obedience to the Noble Prophet (s) to be binding (*wajib*), for instance:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آَمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا مُضَاعَفَةً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ۞ وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ۞ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ﴾

*"O you who have faith! Do not exact usury, twofold and severalfold, and be wary of Allah so that you may be felicitous. And beware of the Fire which has been prepared for the faithless, and obey Allah and the Apostle so that you may be granted [His] mercy."*[1]

And also:

﴿وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ﴾

*"Obey Allah and obey the Apostle; but if you turn away, then Our Apostle's duty is only to communicate in clear terms."*[2]

It can be deduced from these and many other similar verses of the Qur'an that God's Messenger (s) also issued special laws and directives and that is why God, the Exalted, has ordered that obeying him is compulsory (*wajib*). The necessity of obeying the Noble Prophet (s) is not independent, but is a kind of obedience to God, the Exalted. It is obligatory (*wajib*) to obey the Noble Prophet (s) because God, the Exalted, has commanded us to do so.

The Holy Qur'an states:

﴿مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّى فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا﴾

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1. *Qur'an* 3:130-132.
2. *Qur'an* 64:12.

*"Whoever obeys the Apostle certainly obeys Allah; and as for those who turn their backs [on you], We have not sent you to keep watch over them."*[1]

And also:

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا﴾

*"We did not send any apostle but to be obeyed by Allah's leave. Had they, when they wronged themselves, come to you and pleaded to Allah for forgiveness, and the Apostle had pleaded for forgiveness for them, they would have surely found Allah All-clement, All-merciful."*[2]

It was binding (*wajib*) upon Muslims to unquestioningly act upon the Noble Prophet's (s) leadership directives. The Holy Qur'an considers the Noble Prophet's decisions and wishes to have precedence over the people's own desires, and states:

﴿النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَفْعَلُوا إِلَى أَوْلِيَائِكُمْ مَعْرُوفًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴾

*"The Prophet is closer to the faithful than their own souls, and his wives are their mothers. The blood relatives are more entitled to inherit from one another in the Book of Allah than the [other] faithful and Emigrants, barring any*

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1. *Qur'an* 4:80.
2. *Qur'an* 4:64.

*favour you may do your comrades. This has been written in the Book."*[1]

## DOUBTERS

For all practical purposes, God's Prophet (s) was the leader of Muslims, who were obedient to his directives. However, it can be inferred from the Holy Qur'an that that there were some individuals during that same period who disputed the exclusivity of the Noble Prophet's right to governance. It was their opinion that they too had a right to the leadership and said that they would have managed affairs in a better manner and forestalled dangers if they held the authority. The Holy Qur'an recounts their statements in the following way:

﴿ ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمَنَةً نُعَاسًا يَغْشَى طَائِفَةً مِنْكُمْ وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَقُولُونَ هَلْ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ مَا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴾

*"Then He sent down to you safety after grief—a drowsiness that came over a group of you—while another group, anxious only about themselves, entertained false notions about Allah, notions of [pagan] ignorance. They*

[1]. *Qur'an* 33:6.

*say, 'Do we have any role in the matter?' Say, 'Indeed the matter belongs totally to Allah.' They hide in their hearts what they do not disclose to you. They say, 'Had we any role in the matter, we would not have been slain here.' Say, 'Even if you had remained in your houses, those destined to be slain would have set out toward the places where they were laid to rest, so that Allah may test what is in your breasts, and that He may purge what is in your hearts, and Allah knows best what is in the breasts'."*[1]

## THE BATTLE OF UHUD

In order for the meaning of the foregoing verse to become clear, we are obliged to briefly describe the circumstance when it was revealed. When the Noble Prophet (s) was informed that some unbelievers and idolaters had decided to wage war against the Muslims, he gathered his companions and discussed the matter with them. Then he issued an order for jihad.

Abdullah bin Abbi and some other companions said that they deemed it imprudent to go out of Medina. They thought it was more advisable to remain in the city. Then, if the enemies attacked them, they would fight them in the streets of Medina. The women, slaves, and children could help them by throwing stones at the enemies from the rooftops.

But, Sa'd bin Ma'adh and others from the tribe of Aws said, 'O Prophet of God! No one was able to fight with us

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[1]. *Qur'an* 3:154.

when we were idolaters. Now, thanks to you, since we have become Muslims, we are even more prepared for war. O Prophet of God! We will go out of Medina and fight the unbelievers. If we are killed, we will have attained martyrdom; if we remain alive, we will earn divine reward.'

After consultation, the Noble Prophet (s) deemed it prudent to go out of Medina. He ordered the Islamic army to march towards the battlefield. The troops marched towards the enemy but Abdullah bin Abbi, who was against going out of Medina from the beginning, disobeyed the Noble Prophet's order and in the middle of the way returned to Medina. He incited and persuaded his friends to return with him, breaking ranks with the Muslim army.

This was one of the instances where Muslims disputed the authority and orders of the Noble Prophet (s). There were seven hundred Muslim soldiers. The Noble Prophet (s) arranged them in ranks and prepared the battlefield in such a way that Mount Uhud was behind them and Mount 'Aynin was to their left hand side. They were not worried about being attacked from Mount Uhud; however, there was a gap in Mount 'Aynin which the enemy could use to attack the Muslims.

The Prophet (s) ordered 'Abdullah bin Jabir and fifty archers to vigilantly guard that gap and forestall any surprise attack from the enemy. He told them to be careful not to leave this place of ambush opening the way for the enemy to attack. He told them, 'You must not leave this gap even if you see that we have defeated the enemy and have pursued them all the way to Mecca, or if you see that

we have been defeated and the enemy pursues us all the way to Medina.'

The battle began. At the onset, the Muslims prevailed over the unbelievers who fled the battlefield. The Muslims, who perceived themselves to be victorious, stopped fighting and rushed in to plunder the enemy's property. The group responsible for keeping watch on the gap saw that the enemy had fled and that their fellow fighters were collecting the enemy's property. They asked their commander 'Abdullah bin Jabir, 'Why should we remain here and be deprived of the booty?' 'Abdullah bin Jabir responded, 'The Noble Prophet has given us specific orders to not leave this gap unguarded at any time, and disobeying his directives is not permissible.' However, the commander's orders went unheeded. The soldiers left the gap and rushed to join the plundering. Only 'Abdullah bin Jabir and twelve others remained in their positions to guard this gap.

The enemy troops used this opportunity to descend in numbers through the gap of Mount 'Aynin. 'Abdullah bin Jabir and the few Muslim soldiers who had remained in their places, valiantly fought the enemy and attained martyrdom. The enemy troops passed through the gap and attacked the Muslims (who were involved in gathering the war booty) from behind. The Muslim army was taken by surprise and fled in every direction, leaving the Noble Prophet (s) alone. The only ones to remain with him were 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) and a few companions. It was 'Ali bin Abi Talib's self-sacrifice that saved the Noble Prophet's life and prevented the enemies from harming God's Messenger (s). Eventually, the Muslim army regrouped, returned to the side of the Noble Prophet (s),

and defeated the unbelievers, putting them to flight. It was here that the Muslims witnessed the bitter consequences of disobeying the Noble Prophet's (s) orders and directives.

It was at this point that the issue of the Noble Prophet's (s) absolute authority was put forward. People were asking whether it was the Noble Prophet's exclusive right to give commands, or did they too have this right? God, the Exalted, answered them with the revelation of this verse:

﴿ ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمَنَةً نُعَاسًا يَغْشَى طَائِفَةً مِنْكُمْ وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَقُولُونَ هَلْ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ مَا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحِّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴾

*"Then He sent down to you safety after grief—a drowsiness that came over a group of you—while another group, anxious only about themselves, entertained false notions about Allah, notions of [pagan] ignorance. They say, 'Do we have any role in the matter?' Say, 'Indeed the matter belongs totally to Allah.' They hide in their hearts what they do not disclose to you. They say, 'Had we any role in the matter, we would not have been slain here.' Say, 'Even if you had remained in your houses, those destined to be slain would have set out toward the places where they were laid to rest, so that Allah may test what is*

*in your breasts, and that He may purge what is in your hearts, and Allah knows best what is in the breasts'."*[1]

God, the Exalted, considers the cause of the Muslim defeat to be their opposition to the Noble Prophet's (s) orders:

﴿ وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُمْ بِإِذْنِهِ حَتَّى إِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَرَاكُمْ مَا تُحِبُّونَ مِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴾

*"Allah certainly fulfilled His promise to you when you were slaying them with His leave, until you lost courage, disputed about the matter, and disobeyed after He showed you what you loved. Some of you desire this world, and some of you desire the Hereafter. Then He turned you away from them so that He might test you. Certainly He has excused you, for Allah is gracious to the faithful."*[2]

The Noble Prophet (s) governed the Islamic community through a specific program and particular laws which were revealed by God, the Exalted:

﴿ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَى شَرِيعَةٍ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

*"Then We set you upon a clear course of the Law; so follow it, and do not follow the desires of those who do not know."*[3]

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1. *Qur'an* 3:154.
2. *Qur'an* 3:152.
3. *Qur'an* 45:18.

He was at the same time advised to consult the people in political issues and events, although the final decision was his:

﴿ فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ ﴾

*"It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them,* ***and consult them in the affairs****,* ***and once you are resolved, put your trust in Allah****. Indeed Allah loves those who trust in Him."*[1]

## IN SUMMARY

Anyone who refers to the verses of the Holy Qur'an and studies the Noble Prophet's (s) biography and traditions will realize that in addition to receiving divine revelation and disseminating Divine Laws, God's Messenger (s) was also charged with enforcing the Divine Laws among the people, and thus regulating their social affairs. This position was also given to him by God, the Exalted. On the basis of this position, he had the right to make any law and directive he deemed necessary for the governance of the nation and it was binding (*wajib*) upon the people to obey him. Of course his laws and directives were always within the limits and confines of the Divine Law.

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[1]. *Qur'an* 3:159.

## THOSE VESTED WITH AUTHORITY (ULU'L AMR)

The verse mentioned at the beginning of this discussion places those vested with authority (*ulu'l-amr*) alongside God, the Exalted, and the Noble Prophet (s), and makes obedience to them obligatory (*wajib*). It becomes clear that there are individuals among the Muslims who manage the affairs of the people. In the terminology of the Holy Qur'an, these peoples are called 'those vested with authority' (*ulu'l-amr*). They are the ones who are the successors to the Noble Prophet's (s) position of special leadership and authority. Like God's Prophet (s), they have the right to formulate and enforce laws and directives for the management of the nation's social affairs within the limits and confines of the Divine Law. Within these very laws there is a kind of leadership that the Holy Qur'an has made it incumbent to obey the orders of those vested with authority. Therefore, the directives and orders of the Noble Prophet (s) and those of the ones vested with authority both belong to the same category and differ from the Divine Laws.

Perhaps it is for this very reason that the word 'obey' ﴿أَطِيعُوا﴾ has been repeated twice. Whereas with respect to those vested with authority (*ulu'l-amr*) the conjunction 'and' has been used instead:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آَمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآَخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴾

*"O you who have faith!* ***Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority (ulu'l amr)*** *among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you have faith in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome."*[1]

In any case, there is no doubt that it is obligatory to obey those vested with authority (*ulu'l-amr*). However, there are differences of opinion with respect to its applicability. There are several possibilities.

### *The First Possibility*

There are three views in the first possibility.

*First view*: 'Those vested with authority' (*ulu'l-amr*) means the person at the head of the Islamic government, or the one who has assumed power.' A person who accepts this view says, 'It is compulsory to obey anyone who attains leadership, and all people have to be submissive and obedient to him.' Everyone should unquestioningly consent to his directives and no one has the right to disobey his orders. Therefore, every ruler is endowed with authority and it is obligatory to obey him, even if he has attained power by military force and repression, or he has committed hundreds of crimes, murders and genocides to preserve his power. It is compulsory to obey him even if he is a hypocrite, an enemy of Islam and Muslims, or even if he uses his power to destroy religion and to imprison Muslims.

However, the foregoing view is not acceptable and the verse under discussion cannot be interpreted in this

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[1]. *Qur'an* 4:59.

manner. If 'those vested with authority' (*ulu'l-amr*) in this verse means leadership in the absolute sense of the word, this verse can be interpreted in two ways, both of which are unacceptable.

Second view: Sometimes it is said that the verse has made it obligatory to obey all leaders under any conditions and absolutely, even though the leaders' directives may be diametrically opposed to the explicit statements of the Holy Qur'an and contrary to God's and the Noble Prophet's (s) laws. Sometimes this leader may even be determined to fight the Holy Qur'an and eradicate the Divine Laws.

This is an irrational view which no reasonable person would accept. Does reason maintain that God, the Exalted, would put a corrupt and tyrannical individual to control the people's lives, property, and honor? Or, would He make it compulsory to obey him? Could God, the Exalted, grant absolute power to a person who would weaken the foundation of religion and jeopardize the survival of the *Shari'ah* laws and injunctions with corruption and tyranny!? How could God, the Exalted, reveal laws and injunctions through His prophets ('a) to ensure the guidance and prosperity of the people on the one hand; and, on the other hand, make it binding upon Muslims to obey corrupt and imperfect people like the Umayyad and 'Abbasid caliphs. These were people who did not hesitate to commit every kind of oppression and transgression and to fight the Divine Laws!? I do not think any reasonable person would be willing to ascribe such an inadmissible act to God, the Wise.

In addition, if one holds the aforementioned view, it is possible to find a contradiction between the beginning and the end of the verse. If this leader whom it is compulsory to obey issues a directive which is contrary to the explicit statement of God, the Exalted, and the Noble Prophet (s), the beginning of the verse says that the believers should obey God and the Prophet (s) and give precedence to God's laws. But, the end of the verse says that the believers should obey the one endowed with authority (*wali amr*) and give precedence to his directives over God's laws. These two ideas are contradictory.

Third view: According to another view it is said, 'Even if obeying every leader and the one endowed with authority (*wali amr*) is obligatory, this does not mean that it is compulsory to follow all his laws and commands.' It is only binding upon the people to obey him when his directives are in accordance with the laws of the *Shari'ah*. When his directives are contrary to the Divine Laws it is not compulsory to obey him. In this case it becomes necessary for the people to oppose him.

Such a situation has a number of problems.

*First:* This situation would only be possible if all the people have expertise in law and are jurists. In this case they would know which of the leader's directives are in accordance with the standards of the *Shari'ah* and which ones do not conform to the Divine Law and should be opposed. It is impossible for everyone to have this expertise.

*Second*: According to this assumption, obeying the one endowed with authority (*wali amr*) when his directives are in accordance with the *Shari'ah* and disobeying him when

his directives do not conform with the *Shari'ah* is in reality obeying God rather than the one endowed with authority. This invalidates the exigency of obeying the one endowed with authority, the leader of the people.

*Third*: In following this view the spirit of obedience and respect for laws, which is one of the fundamental conditions for the advancement of every country and its social order, is taken from the people. Communities with various beliefs and opinions would come into existence. Each group would rise up against one of the laws for one reason or another. A spirit of anarchy and disobedience would grow among the people. Each group would use various pretexts to oppose any one of the laws which they deemed contrary to their personal interests.

Consequently, social order and discipline would be thrown into disarray. The country's unity would fall apart, and the one endowed with authority would not be able to function. Therefore, this view is rejected altogether, and the verse under discussion cannot be interpreted in this way.

### *The Second Possibility*

It may be said that the verse under discussion means that 'the one endowed with authority' (*wali amr*) is a person whom the people themselves have elected to leadership. In this case God, the Exalted, is saying, 'Obey the person whom you have chosen and who has attained the position of leadership.'

This possibility too is incompatible with the outward aspect of the verse under discussion and is fundamentally unacceptable. The verse does not denote more than that it is binding upon Muslims to obey the one who has

occupied the seat of leadership and has been endowed with authority. It does not speak of who the one endowed with authority (*wali amr*) is or by what means he can attain this position. The verse does not say that it is obligatory to obey whoever the people have chosen to occupy the seat of leadership. It says that people should obey the leader and the one endowed with authority. But, this verse does not say who those endowed with authority (*ulu'l-amr*) are and how they may attain this position.

Even if we disregard this objection, it cannot be said that it is compulsory to obey and follow completely every person who is selected to the seat of Islamic leadership through the people's election and assumes the seat of authority. The same objections which have been raised against the first possibility also apply here. Therefore, the first and second possibilities are invalid, and the verse under discussion cannot be interpreted in either of these two manners.

### *The Third Possibility*

The *wali amr* (the one endowed with authority) is a person who has been appointed by God, the Exalted, to the position of leadership and the position of Imamate in Islam. God, the Exalted, tells the Muslims that they have to obey the one who assumes this position.

Explanation:

Divine Laws and precepts are not limited to issues of worship; rather, they permeate all material and spiritual facets of human life. There are political, penal and juridical laws for governing the country. It is also an

indisputable fact that a law which has no guarantee of enforcement will not have effective results.

The Noble Prophet (s), who brought the *Shari'ah* laws and injunctions, was not to remain among mankind forever in order to be the guarantor of the enforcement and preservation of the Divine Laws. That is why God, the Wise, designated specific people for the nation's leadership and the preservation and execution of the Divine Laws. These people have to be completely reliable, know the laws and injunctions of religion, and be free of grave wrongdoings and petty misdemeanors. That is to say, they must be infallible (*ma'sum*).

The Holy Qur'an has called these people *ulu'l-amr* (those vested with authority), placed them alongside God, the Exalted, and the Noble Prophet (s), and made it obligatory to obey them. Since they are inerrant with respect to grave wrongdoings and petty misdemeanors, their directives are always within the realm of the Divine Laws and they never transgress the bounds of religion.

It is compulsory to obey them because they are immaculate. No contradiction or disagreement may be found between their directives and the laws of God, the Exalted, and the Noble Prophet (s). If we interpret the verse in this sense, the foregoing objections will automatically be eliminated.

### *A Short Discussion*

The beginning of the verse says, '*O you who have faith! Obey Allah*.' The obligation to obey God, the Exalted, is a general and absolute injunction without being tied to any conditions or restrictions. People have to obey the Divine

Laws and precepts. And, any law that is contrary to His commands is devoid of value and significance. It is impossible for a law to exist from anyone or under any circumstances alongside the Divine Laws and to denigrate them. This can easily be deduced based on the verse under discussion. Furthermore, human reason attests to the fact that obeying God is an issue related to logic and conscience.

The Holy Qur'an does not permit people to follow and obey tyrants and those who pursue their carnal desires. It has completely forbidden this. It is written:

﴿ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ۝ وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ۝ الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴾

*"So be wary of Allah and obey me, and do not obey the dictates of the profligates, who cause corruption in the land and do not bring about reform."*[1]

In another place it is mentioned:

﴿ وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا﴾

*"Content yourself with the company of those who supplicate their Lord morning and evening, desiring His Face, and do not lose sight of them, desiring the glitter of the life of this world.* ***And Do not obey him whose heart We have made oblivious to Our remembrance, and who***

[1]. *Qur'an* 26:150-152.

***follows his own desires, and whose conduct is [mere] profligacy.'"***[1]

There are also many traditions transmitted from the Infallibles ('a) which denote this.[2]

Therefore, people should act in accordance with the Divine Laws and injunctions according to rational judgment, on the basis of the beginning of the verse under discussion and many other verses of the Holy Qur'an, and based on the traditions. Any law or directive that is contrary to God's laws is devoid of any practical value.

The verse goes on to say, '*and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority* (*ulu'l amr*) *among you.*' This injunction is also a general and absolute directive, and it doesn't have any restrictions or conditions. It states that it is obligatory for everyone to obey the one endowed with authority (*wali amr*) in all circumstances. No one has the right to disobey his commands and directives, or prefer the directives of someone else to that of the one endowed with authority.

Therefore, absolute and general injunctions have been issued at the beginning and end of the verse under discussion which are both binding upon the people. They will be able to obey God's law absolutely, plus the directives of the one vested with authority (*wali amr*), if there is no contradiction or disagreement between these two. If the one vested with authority is an infallible human being, there will be no contradiction or disagreement between the beginning and end of the verse. The directives

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1. *Qur'an* 18:28.
2. *Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 273; *Wasa'il al-Shi'ah*, vol. 11, p. 422.

of the infallible one vested with authority are always within the bounds of the Divine Laws and not contradictory to God's injunctions. However, if the one endowed with authority is not infallible, it often happens that he issues directives that are in opposition to the Divine Laws. In such a case, a disagreement arises between his directives and God's Laws. But, the general meaning of the beginning of this verse is that people must act upon God's command and pay no heed to other people's directives. Whereas, the general meaning of the end of the verse is that people must act upon the directives of the one vested with authority (*wali amr*) and prefer his directives to all other directives. In this case where a contradiction exists, the people's duty is not clear. Therefore, we have no choice but to interpret 'those vested with authority' (*ulu'l amr*) to mean infallible human beings. It is in this way that no disagreement will arise between the beginning and end of the verse.

### *An Objection and a Response*

One may say that there is no need to construe 'those vested with authority' (*ulu'l amr*) to mean infallible human beings. We can interpret it to mean 'leader' in the absolute sense of the word. But, how is it possible to conceive of absolute and obligatory obedience to a fallible leader when it is possible that he may issue directives contrary to God's laws?

Those who believe that 'those vested with authority' (*ulu'l amr*) are not infallible answer this question in the following way. They say that God, the Wise, has ordered people to obey the directives of their leader because a system of government is necessary for a nation. Social

affairs cannot be corrected without the existence of a strong leader. Therefore, it is absolutely obligatory to obey the leader, whoever he may be, so that his laws will be effective and in order to avert disarray in the system of government. Of course, some of his directives may contradict the Divine Laws and precepts,and parts of the Divine Laws may fail to be implemented as a result of obeying the one endowed with authority (*wali amr*). This is not a problem, because a more important interest will be obtained which is the preservation of security and order. This more important interest can make up for the Divine Laws which were not implemented.

***Response:***

Firstly, the objection previously raised still applies. The explicit meanings of the beginning and end of the verse contradict and oppose each other. The beginning of the verse says that obeying God, the Exalted, is binding upon everyone in all situations. His laws and injunctions take precedence over those of others. But, the end of the verse states that obeying the one vested with authority (*wali amr*) is absolutely obligatory. How can we hold on to the express meaning of the end of the verse and let go of the meaning of the beginning of the verse?

Secondly, it may be inferred from many verses of the Qur'an and traditions that it is necessary to safeguard Divine Laws in all circumstances. Any directive opposed to them is devoid of practical value. Therefore, what is the justification for ignoring Divine Laws and completely following the directives of a fallible human being?

Thirdly, let us imagine that a leader is opposed to religion and the Holy Qur'an, wishes to violate the Holy Qur'an

and the *Shari'ah*, and intends to shake the foundations of monotheism and piety. Can obeying such a person be considered obligatory? Could we say that God has made it absolutely compulsory to obey him for the preservation of social order and security? I do not think anyone with a sound conscience would accept such an idea.

### *Another Objection and Response*

A person may bring up the following objections. Those vested with authority (*ulu'l amr*) means 'leaders'. As a result, we cannot deduce the necessity for infallibility (*'ismat*) from this term. The verse states that we have to obey our leaders. But, this does not mean that it is absolutely compulsory to obey them in all circumstances. It is only obligatory to obey them when their directives are in accordance with the Divine Laws, because the obligation to obey the one endowed with authority (*wali amr*) is not absolute. Rather, it is confined by the beginning of the verse, which says to obey God. After stating this it says to obey the leaders. The beginning of the verse is evidence that the obligation to obey those vested with authority holds true when they do not oppose the Divine Laws. If the leaders' directives are in opposition to the Divine Law, obeying the laws of the *Shari'ah* takes precedence.

For example, a country's president issues laws and directives and sends a dispatch to one of the cities in which he says the people of that city have to conduct themselves according to these laws. Then, he sends a governor with another dispatch to this city wherein he says he has appointed this person as their governor to enforce his directives. Hence the people have to obey the

governor's directives. From among these two directives, the people clearly understand that it is obligatory to obey the governor only when he is enforcing the laws of the country. In this example, it would not be compulsory to obey the governor if he issues directives contrary to the official laws of the country. The people believe that he is charged with executing the laws of the country and is not allowed to conduct himself according to the whims and desires of his heart.

Here is another example. The commander-in-chief of the armed forces appoints someone to be the colonel of a regiment. He tells the soldiers to obey the orders of this colonel. The soldiers clearly understand that obeying their colonel is obligatory only when his orders are not opposed to those of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The soldiers will not obey the colonel in circumstances where he issues orders contrary to those of the commander-in-chief. If they do however disobey the orders of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and obey their colonel, they will be interrogated. They may offer excuses that they were obliged to obey their colonel, but such excuses will not be accepted.

Now, you can compare the verse under discussion with these two examples. If you take the beginning and end of this verse into consideration, you will clearly understand that obeying the one endowed with authority and the leader is obligatory only when his directives are not opposed to God's laws.

Therefore, it is binding upon Muslims to obey the one vested with authority only when his directives are in accordance with the standards of the *Shari'ah*. However,

they should oppose him if he violates God's Laws so that he may stop his illicit deeds. If he ignores their opposition, then they have to depose him and select someone who is pious to take his position. Abu Bakr too had made this same suggestion. While making a speech, he said, 'As long as I obey God, you should obey me. However, if I act contrary to the Divine Laws, disobey me and compel me to follow the right path.'

As history attests, the Muslims rebelled against 'Uthman's government, removed him, and eventually killed him, because he violated God's laws. Therefore, the obligation to obey the one vested with authority must not be considered to be an absolute and unrestricted issue. Rather, it is restricted by the beginning of the verse.

If we assume this verse to be absolute, it is absolute in the same way that other such verses are absolute. We have many absolute verses in the Holy Qur'an which are limited by other verses of the Qur'an and traditions, such as:

﴿وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا﴾

*"And Do not obey him whose heart We have made oblivious to Our remembrance, and who follows his own desires, and whose conduct is [mere] profligacy."*[1]

﴿وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ۝ الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ﴾

*"And do not obey the dictates of the profligates, who cause corruption in the land and do not bring about reform.*[1]

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[1]. *Qur'an* 18:28.

The verse pertaining to those endowed with authority may be restricted by the foregoing verses and the traditions with similar meanings. Therefore, it is not necessary for the one vested with authority to be an infallible person.

***Response:***

Despite all these explanations, the beginning and end of the verse under discussion still have absolute, exact meanings. The categorical meaning of the beginning of the verse says obey God and do not pay heed to directives which are opposed to the Divine Laws. The end of the verse says obey the directives of the one vested with authority, and his orders take precedence over those of others. This means if the one endowed with authority issues an order opposed to the Divine Laws, it is obligatory to obey him according to the absolute meaning of the end of the verse. But, according to the exact meaning of the beginning of the verse his orders have no value. Rather, Divine Laws take precedence. Preferring one meaning to the other has no justification. Why should we keep the categorical meaning of the beginning of the verse and let go of the categorical meaning of the end of the verse? The opposite is also possible. In such a situation, the person whose duty it is to follow is at a loss as to what his duty is. However, if the one endowed with authority is infallible (*ma'sum*), a contradiction will never arise between his directives and the Divine Laws.

Furthermore, as has already been said, this verse does not say to obey the leader who has obtained leadership by force or through an election. It says obey the real leader

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[1]. *Qur'an* 26:151-152.

who has the qualifications and credentials approved of by God, the Exalted. God, the Wise, does not endorse the leadership, deeds, or words of a person whom He does not trust one hundred percent.

How could we imagine that God, the Wise, would formally recognize the leadership of people who are not infallible, approve of their deeds, and give them authority over the people's lives, property and honor? Would He even give them authority over His religion and laws? Such people would abuse this power if given absolute authority. They would strengthen the foundation of their own government and gain control of the nation's economic and social affairs as people endowed with authority and leaders whom it is obligatory to obey. They would use this power to buy weapons for their armies, and they would coerce and bribe people into collaborating with them.

Once the foundation of their government was strong, their selfish and egocentric instinct would swell. Their love of power and wealth would make them blind and deaf, whereupon they would not heed God's laws. Their hearts would not be affected by the cries and complaints of the oppressed. They would fight anyone they imagined to be an obstacle to their power and interpret God's laws according to their own selfish interests. They would even become audacious to publicly oppose God's commandments whenever they deemed it to be expedient, thereby shaking the foundations of religion and altering the Divine Laws. They would kill anyone who rose up against them on the pretext that they are endowed with authority and that it is obligatory to obey them.

Didn't the Umayyad and 'Abbasid caliphs use the pretext that they were 'commanders of the faithful' and leaders whom it was obligatory to obey in order to commit all of thier crimes and to abolish their opponents? Didn't they kill Imam Husayn ('a) on the pretext that he had opposed the Noble Prophet's (s) successor and leader whom it was compulsory to obey? Study the history of the early days of Islam and see what great crimes caliphs who were not infallible committed on the pretext of being vested with authority. See which pure and pious people they killed? Is it possible for God, the Wise, to make obedience to such untrustworthy people obligatory? Is it conceivable that He would formally recognize their government, and thereby increase their influence and power!? In such circumstances, wouldn't the people have the right to ask God, the Exalted, why he made obedience to such untrustworthy people compulsory and formally recognized their governments? Why did He give them power over people's lives, wealth and honor, and even over His own religion and laws? I do not believe any person's conscience would be ready to ascribe such an inadmissible thing to the Wise Lord.

Those who bring up this objection say that the people have to oppose the directives of the one vested with authority if they are opposed to the standards of the *Shari'ah*, depose him if he does not submit to the Divine Laws, and select a pious person to take his place.

In response to this idea, the following should be said:

Firstly, this could only happen if the people of the Islamic nation are completely knowledgeable about the Divine Laws and commandments. Plus, their erudition should

have reached a level where they would not be deceived by the hypocrisy and misleading justifications of the leader and his collaborators. However, in normal circumstances this may not happen.

Secondly, even if they opposed the leader, they would not get any positive results. Opposing a well-equipped and powerful government which is in control and is supported by a great number of people would not yield any benefit. The only result would be internal chaos and permanent conflict, despite the fact that the purpose of this obligation to obey the one endowed with authority is to forestall disorder and to strengthen the foundations of the Islamic government.

Thirdly, if *wali amr* meant leader in the absolute sense of the word and the obligation to obey him was conditional on his directives being in accordance with the standards of the *Shari'ah*, it would be necessary to expressly mention such a sensitive and important condition. Otherwise, people might be misled and confused.

## THE ONE VESTED WITH AUTHORITY AS MENTIONED IN THE TRADITIONS

There are many traditions in the Shi'ah and Sunni books which interpret the verse under discussion to refer to the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) and consider infallibility (*'ismat*) to be a necessary quality of those vested with authority (*ulu'l amr*).

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) wrote the following to Mu‘awiyah, ‘The verse “*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority (ulu’l amr) among you,*” was revealed with respect to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a), not you.’[1]

Yazid bin Mu‘awiyah reported, ‘I asked Imam Baqir (‘a) the meaning of the verse “*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*”. He answered, “It means us only.”’[2]

Imam Sadiq (‘a) was asked the meaning of the verse, ‘*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*’. He said, ‘Those vested with authority means those who possess erudition and knowledge.’ They asked, ‘Is the verse for a particular group or general?’ He responded, ‘It is specifically about us.’[3]

Jabir asked the Noble Prophet (s) the interpretation of the verse, ‘*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*’. He said, ‘Who are those vested with authority whom we have been commanded to obey?’ The Noble Prophet (s) responded, ‘The caliphs and holders of authority after me. The first of them is my brother ‘Ali, and after him his sons Hasan and Husayn. After Husayn is ‘Ali bin al-Husayn and then comes Muhammad Baqir whom you, O Jabir, will meet. Send him my greetings when you meet him. The caliph after him is Ja‘far Sadiq, and then follows

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1. *Ithbat al-Hudat*, vol. 3, p. 96.
2. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 290.
3. *Jami‘ Ahadith al-Shi‘ah*, vol. 1, p. 177.

Musa Kazim, ‘Ali Rida, Muhammad Jawad, ‘Ali Hadi, Hasan ‘Askari and then [the last of them] is the Awaited Mahdi (‘aj)[1].’[2]

Umar bin Sa‘id reported, ‘I asked Abu al-Hasan (‘a) the meaning of the verse “*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*”. He said, “It means ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) and his successors.”’[3]

Abu Basir has narrated that Imam Baqir (‘a) interpreted the verse ‘*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*’ in the following way, ‘Those vested with authority are the Imams who will be descended from ‘Ali (‘a) and Fatimah (‘a) in direct succession until the Day of Resurrection.’[4]

Jabir Ja‘fi narated, ‘I asked Imam Baqir (‘a) the interpretation of the verse “*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you.*” He said, ‘It means the executors [of the Noble Prophet’s (s) will].’[5]

Husayn bin Abi al-‘Ala’ narated, ‘I asked Imam Sadiq (‘a) if obeying the executors [of the Noble Prophet’s (s) will] was obligatory. He said, “Yes, they are the people about whom God, the Exalted, has said, ‘*O you who have faith!*

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[1]. The abbreviation (‘aj) is repeated after the name of the last Imam, Imam Mahdi (‘aj), and stands for *‘ajjalallahu ta‘ala farajahu’sh-sharif* (May God hurry his noble return). [Ed.]
[2]. *Ithbat al-Hudat*, vol. 3, p. 123.
[3]. *Tafsir Ayashi*, vol. 1, p. 253.
[4]. *Ithbat al-Hudat*, vol. 3, p. 131.
[5]. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 300.

*Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you'"*.'[1]

Salim bin Qays reported that he heard Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) say, 'Only obeying God, His Prophet and those endowed with authority is obligatory. It is obligatory to follow those vested with authority because they are immaculate, pure, and never order anyone to sin.'[2]

Hakim recounted that he asked Imam Sadiq ('a) whom those vested with authority and whom it was compulsory to obey were. The Imam ('a) said, 'They are 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), Hasan ('a), Husayn ('a), 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a), Muhammad bin 'Ali ('a) and me, Ja'far. Thank God, the Exalted, that I have told you whom your Imams are, despite the fact that the people have denied them.'[3]

'Abdullah bin 'Ajalan narrated that Abu Ja'far ('a) interpreted the verse '*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*' in the following way, 'This verse was revealed about 'Ali ('a) and the Imams ('a) [after him]. God, the Exalted, has given them the rank of the Prophets ('a), except that they do not announce anything to be *halal* (legal and permissible) or *haram* (illegal and impermissible).

Abu Basir narrated from Abu Ja'far that the Noble Prophet (s) appointed Imam 'Ali ('a), Hasan ('a), and Husayn ('a) to be the executors of his will. Then he said,

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1. *Ibid*.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 25, p. 200.
3. *Tafsir Ayashi*, vol. 1, p. 252.

'God, the Exalted, has said, "*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*". He meant the Imams ('a) and the children of 'Ali ('a) and Fatimah ('a), who will succeed each other until the Day of Resurrection.'[1]

Aban narrated that he went to see Imam Rida ('a) and asked him what God's words '*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*' meant. The Imam ('a) said, 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a)', then he was quiet. When his silence became prolonged, I asked, 'Who comes after him?' He answered, 'Hasan ('a)' and again he was quiet. When I noticed that his silence had again become prolonged, I asked, 'Who comes after him?' He said, 'Husayn ('a).' I asked, 'Who comes after him?' He said, ''Ali bin Husayn ('a).' He again became quiet. Thus, I kept asking who came next until he named each of the Imams ('a) up to the last.'[2]

'Isa bin Sari narrated that he asked Imam Ja'far Sadiq ('a), 'Introduce me to the pillars of Islam which will purify deeds when they are carried out, thereby making them acceptable, and that which remains unknown will not cause me any loss.' The Imam ('a) answered, 'Bearing witness to the Unity of God, bearing witness to the apostleship of Muhammad (s), acknowledging what the Noble Prophet (s) brought from God (i.e. divine revelation in the form of the Holy Qur'an), acknowledging the rights which have been set on property, such as *zakat*, and acknowledging the guardianship which God, the Exalted, has ordered human beings to submit to, namely the

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1. *Dala'il al-Imamah*, p. 231.
2. *Tafsir Ayashi*, vol. 1, p. 251.

guardianship of Muhammad's household (‘a). The Noble Prophet (s) said, "Whoever dies without knowing the Imam of the time has died the death of pre-Islamic [pagan] ignorance." God, the Exalted, said, "*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*". The first [of those vested with authority] is ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a), after him is Hasan (‘a), then Husayn (‘a), then ‘Ali bin Husayn (‘a), then Muhammad bin ‘Ali (‘a), and the matter will continue in this manner.

The earth will not be reformed without the presence of an Imam. Anyone who dies without knowing their Imam has died the death of pre-Islamic, pagan ignorance.'[1]

It has been deduced from the foregoing discussions and traditions of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) that it is obligatory to obey the *ulu'l amr* (those vested with authority) because they are infallible, inerrant with respect to both grave wrongdoings and petty misdemeanors, and never issue orders opposed to the Divine Laws.

### *Important Matter*

The foregoing discussions do not mean that Muslims have no need for a leader or government during the era of occultation, or that they should not interfere in the designation of their leader and the formation of government.

We do not mean to say this at all. However, Muslims, just like any other people in any era and time, need a just,

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[1]. *Yanabi‘ al-Mawadah*, vol. 1, p. 351; *Ghayat al-Maram*, p. 365-368.

pious and erudite leader to manage the affairs of the Islamic world in a good manner and to forestall internal chaos, oppression and transgression. Muslims need a leader who will strive for their country's development and progress, raise the level of education and awareness, defend Islamic frontiers and the Muslims, and deter foreign invasions. Muslims cannot be apathetic and indifferent to the designation of a leader, to whom their life is attached. The necessity of government is not a new thing brought about by Islam. It is a deep rooted and indisputable issue considered to be a necessity by all nations and peoples. Humankind has always felt the necessity for government since the beginning of civilization and social life. Muslims too are not exempted from this general principle. It is true that according to Shi'ite documents, the pure Imams ('a), who are infallible and inerrant with respect to both grave wrongdoings and petty misdemeanors, have been appointed and designated to the seat of caliphate and leadership by God, the Exalted. Plus, it is obligatory to obey them according to the verse '*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you*' and other verses and traditions. In addition, Muslims have been advised to select those chosen, divine individuals to be their leaders and to endeavor to strengthen the position given to them by God, the Exalted. However, this does not mean that Islam has absolutely nullified the government and leadership of fallible people, and it has not told the Muslims to avoid submitting to such a government. Nor has it said that they do not have any right whatsoever to form a government in any era or to get involved in choosing their destiny. Islam has not told Muslims that

they should not participate in forming a government and choosing their destiny when they have no access to an infallible leader. Rather, it has said that just like all other people and nations, social life will not be manageable without a leader, and therefore they have no choice but to choose a leader in every era.

That is why when the Khajirites said, "There is no command except from Allah", 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) responded, "This sentence is correct, but the way they are using it is wrong. It is true that command lies only with Allah, but these people say that (the function of) governance is only for Allah. The fact is that people have to have a ruler, good or bad. The faithful perform (good) acts under his rule while the unfaithful enjoy worldly benefits from it. By means of government, the commands of Allah can be carried out. Plus, taxes can be collected so that enemies can be fought, roadways can be protected and the rights of the weak can be secured from the strong so that the virtuous can enjoy peace and be secure from (the oppression of) the wicked."[1]

In summary, one should not conclude from discussions pertaining to the Imamate that during the era of occultation, Muslims must not participate in the formation of government. Just like all other nations and peoples it is unavoidable that we devote sustained effort to participate in the formation of a just and equitable government. Furthermore, during the occultation of the Imam ('aj), Muslims have an even greater duty to prepare the world and its people for the formation of a universal, Islamic government of justice and equity.

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[1]. *Nahj al-Balagha*, sermon no. 40.

Of course the manner of forming an Islamic government and the qualifications of the leader call for a series of detailed and long discussions. Such discussions are currently outside the domain of this discourse.

# *PART TWO*

# *THE IMAMATE FROM THE STANDPOINT OF REASON*

## PROOF OF GENERAL PROPHETHOOD

The same reasoning that is used to prove prophethood in general (*nubuwat 'ammah*), which denotes that it is necessary for God, the Wise, to send Prophets ('a) to guide and admonish people, and which says these Prophets ('a) must present [His] laws and commandments to mankind is also used to prove that in the absence of a Prophet ('a) there has to be a chosen and infallible individual among people. This individual should strive to safeguard and preserve the Divine Laws. For this reason, we are compelled to initially explain briefly the rational proofs for general prophethood and then enter into the discourse on Imamate.

## GENERAL PROPHETHOOD

Before beginning this discussion, it is necessary to mention several introductory topics before going on to present our reasoning.

***First Topic:***

It has been proven in the rational sciences that humans are made up of a soul and a body. Humans are subject to change and transformation like other forms of physical matter with respect to the body. With respect to the soul, he belongs to the world of incorporeal beings. However,

there is a complete connection and relationship between his soul and body. In fact, his soul and body are united.

To state this more accurately, humans have two existential levels and stages. At a lower level, humans are united with the body and perform material deeds. And, at a higher level, they are one with the soul and perform the deeds of incorporeal beings.

The human soul can move, develop, and attain perfection because it is joined with matter and is not purely incorporeal. It is self-evident that the soul of an infant is not at the same level of existential perfection as that of a wise scholar. Furthermore, these two cannot be considered to be equal and the same.

Human life begins from an unconscious and unaware seminal fluid. When the sperm of man's seminal fluid enters the womb of a woman and unites with an ovule, new life begins. In this stage, it feeds on nourishment from the mother like herbage and continues its growth. It is not capable of doing anything except feeding and growing. In reality it is a growing mass.

However, this same unconscious and unaware being gradually develops and becomes more complete. It acquires the physical senses and life at an animal level. It performs actions and movements consciously and freely. During the initial stages, its ability to feel and its sense perception is very insignificant. It is no more than that of the lowest animals. However, as it progresses and develops it advances from the level of animals and enters the stage of humanity. It acquires a new life which is much higher and loftier than that of plants and animals. Thus, it moves from pure material life and enters the realm of

immateriality. However, it is not deprived of progress and development when it becomes a human being and enters the realm of incorporeity. Rather, it advances gradually. Its soul and psyche become stronger and more complete, and the domain of its existence becomes wider and more radiant. As long as it is alive in this world, the human is continually in a state of motion and perfection.

In all stages of perfection, the human soul is nothing more than a reality which has changed and progressed until it reaches an existential level. However, one should not imagine that under such circumstances the soul's origin and essence remains in its original state and perfections are merely added to it. Rather, perfection and completion means that the intrinsic substance of the essence and the reality and being of a thing grows and progresses until it attains a higher level and becomes a part of that same level. Therefore, the special creation of mankind is such that it can progress from the level of that imperfect material through stages of perfection. The intrinsic substance of the human essence gradually becomes more complete and more radiant until it returns to the realm of purity, radiance and perfection.

***Second Topic:***

Human beings are on the path to perfection, naturally attentive to it, and equipped with the power to grow towards it. Therefore, attainment of this goal must be feasible and possible, because our creation is not a vain or futile deed. In the same way that God, the Exalted, has provided each of the world's material things with the means to attain its utmost perfection and to reach its ultimate goal, humanity too is not exempted from this

general principle and is not deprived of this grace. It is necessary that God, the Wise, provide the means by which humans may attain perfection and reach the desired goal.

***Third Topic:***

Since human beings are composed of a body and a soul, they naturally have two kinds of existence: one is a worldly life which is related to the body, and the other is a spiritual life which is related to the psychological being and mind. With respect to each of these two levels of existence, every person will either obtain prosperity or wretchedness.

While people are busy with their worldly lives and sometimes completely heedless of the realm of the soul and spiritual life, they also have an esoteric and hidden life inside themselves and within their psychic realm whether they are in agreement with this or not. They either move towards bliss and perfection or towards wretchedness and destruction. Pure thoughts, correct beliefs, good morals, and praiseworthy deeds which spring from a person's inner being are the causes and guarantees of human spiritual perfection and progression. Similarly, false beliefs, immorality, and improper deeds which are in opposition to our existence turn humanity away from the straight path and lead towards lowliness and iniquity.

If one is on the straight path towards perfection, his intrinsic essence and human nature will grow and become more complete. After passing through stages or levels he will rise and return to his original realm which is the realm of luminosity, ease, and happiness. On the other hand, if human beings sacrifice spiritual perfection and human

ethics in order to satiate their animal instincts or become enslaved by the desires of the carnal soul, they will become wanton and ferocious beasts. They will leave the straight path leading towards perfection and humanity and wander in the valley of destruction and iniquity.

### *Fourth Topic*

In the same way that there is a strong connection and unity between the body and soul, there is also a perfect affinity and correlation between material and spiritual life. In other words, the conduct, movements, and deeds of the body affect the soul in the same way that spiritual states, qualities, and attributes affect the accomplishment of outward deeds. The repetition of sins and evil deeds pollutes and contaminates the soul making it inclined towards evil. On the contrary, the repetition of good deeds makes the soul pure, luminous and inclined towards good deeds. The more a person does good or bad deeds, the more the soul falls under their sway and influence and acquires a reality (or actuality) befitting them. It is even possible for the soul to attain a level of goodness where it perceives nothing but serenity and perfection and traverses no path save that of goodness and benefaction. However, it is also possible for the soul to fall to a level of misfortune and misery where it seeks the path of iniquity and deviant behavior.

Whatever form the soul takes and whatever reality it is transformed into, its deeds and acts will be of that type and suitable to that nature. Dissociation between temporal and spiritual life is impossible, and it is not possible to consider them separately. It is not feasible for a person to be able to attain ideal human perfection and spiritual bliss

without doing good deeds and controlling his outward acts. It is also not possible to completely succeed in outward reformation and control of one's deeds without rectification and purification of the soul.

People who say that the performance of good deeds is not necessary and that one ought to strive only to rectify the soul and purify the heart are very much mistaken.

***Fifth Topic:***

Among scientists there are some shallow minded people who have a fondness for outward appearances, who have overlooked the precious nature and character of human beings, and who have not understood the mystery of their creation. For this reason, they overlook spiritual life and existence and do not believe in any values for human beings other than eating and sleeping.

One of these scientists has written, 'Man has come into existence to live. In other words, he has come into existence to procure food and wear clothes. In addition, he must protect himself and participate in society. Therefore, there is no need for his religion to compel him to think and reflect on the mysteries of the world and consequently cause him to lag behind in life.'

As you can see, this writer has lowered the position of human beings from the high status of humanity to a low level of animal life. He does not believe in any status or purpose save eating and sleeping. However, the intellectual sciences and philosophy do not accept this theory and establish a higher status and level for human beings.

It has been proven in the intellectual sciences and philosophy that the personality and greatness of human beings is dependent on the soul. The reality and human element of humankind is dependent on the immaterial component. Therefore, the secret of creation and the final goal of existence have to be considered when discussing the perfection and cultivation of the soul and spiritual life. Overlooking the spiritual aspect of life is tantamount to turning a blind eye to the origin and true nature of human existence.

The aim of the creation of humankind is spiritual life and perfection of the soul. It is not possible for God, the Wise, Who created human beings and the material world and all within it for their provision, to turn a blind eye to their spiritual life and to not put at their disposal the means for attaining perfection and a program for attaining the final goal.

***Sixth Topic:***

Without a doubt mankind is naturally enamored with perfection and intrinsically pays heed to this ultimate goal. Humans strive and endeavor day and night in pursuit of this reality. All of their deeds and activities revolve around the development and acquisition of perfection. Humans consistently exert all of their energies in acquiring perfection and virtues in order to make their beings more complete and effective. All human beings strive on this path, but are often incapable and unable to discern real perfection. They imagine valueless and unreal things to be true perfection and strive twofold for the attainment of these valueless and unreal things.

Another group imagines that perfection lies in the accumulation of silver and gold. Others are enamored with the acquisition and registration of lands in their names. Some are in love with power and position and conjecture that perfection lies in people submitting to them, paying homage to them, and unquestioningly carrying out their orders.

All of these people have no goal other than the attainment of real perfection. However, they are mistaken in discerning what real perfection is. They conjecture relative perfection to be real perfection. Their sensual appetites and desires and their animal feelings and instincts often obscure the intellect from discerning real perfection, the straight path of humanity, and divert it from the path of reality. This leads one towards deviation and a vale of tears.

***Seventh Topic:***

Humans are not instinctively social and there is no innate quality within called a social nature. Nonetheless, a secondary trait in humans is that they are social, fear being alone, and have accepted social life. However, it is suitable to discuss why human beings who seek seclusion have accepted social life and seem obligated to the establishment of society.

Do humans embrace society in order to help and benefit humankind? Has humankind become social due to a fear of wild animals? Was it for the need of securing material needs and because it was so difficult to manage life that individuals joined their own kind in order to employ and use each other in securing their own benefits?

The aforementioned issues have been discussed in books of psychology, sociology and the history of religions. Proofs have been cited for each one of them. However, it seems the correct answer is that people are naturally self-seeking. They have embraced social life in order to use and employ their own kind to obtain their own desires.

In explanation it should be said that we were not present when the first human societies were established. Thus, we cannot be sure of the origins of this topic. It is also difficult nowadays to locate human beings who do not live communally. Even if they do exist, we have no access to them and therefore cannot examine the conditions under which they live and know their basic and unaltered instincts. However, we can examine the deeds and instincts of present day human beings. With the help of our imaginations we can inquire into the depths of the spirit and mind. And, by going back into the depths of history, we can investigate the lives of primitive humans.

Using this method, we come to the understanding that the first feeling which primitive humans felt was that of hunger and thirst. After they experienced these feelings of hunger and thirst, they looked for ways to alleviate their inner pains. In order to satisfy these needs they used plants and fruits. In other words, they benefitted from them for their comfort and ease.

Gradually, humans realized that they could use external things to secure their needs. They used plants, fruits and water in order to satiate their hunger and thirst. They sought refuge in caves from the cold and heat. The circle of things which they used enlarged day by day. They advanced from using inanimate things to using animals.

Humans began using the milk and wool of animals and tamed strong animals for transportation and labor.

Men and women revolted due to the influence of their sexual instincts. Both sexes felt they needed and were attracted to the other in order to satisfy their needs. That is why they came close to each other so that they could derive pleasure from one another. Strong men confined a woman or women for their exclusive use in satiating their sexual desires.

Of course, in order to keep them they had to provide their essential needs and help them. This is when the issue of cooperation arose. This formed the foundation of society. People's main concern was using and deriving benefit from their own kind.

The family arose from the union of two people. Mothers and fathers took care of their children so that they could grow up, become strong, and be useful.

From the family arose clans and tribes. Then, villages were formed. Next, cities arose. Finally, with the passage of time, countries were founded.

Through the course of all these stages, human being's only intention was to benefit from, use, and exploit each other. Human beings created society for their own profit, not to benefit others. Therefore, it should be said that mankind's basic nature is to use and derive benefit [from its own kind].

A philosopher by the name of Hobbes has said that human beings wish to subjugate and dominate others.[1]

Nevertheless, human beings have the instincts of using other people and selfishness. Each person is concerned with his own personal benefit and wishes to unconditionally derive benefit from other human beings. This situation leads to chaos and disorder, making life impossible. Thus, people are forced to restrain their greedy self-seeking instinct to what is necessary, to help other people as well, and to choose a society in which there is cooperation. Out of necessity and exigency, they submit to cooperation and mutual assistance. However, this does not mean that they have lost the instincts of exploiting others and seeking their own benefit. That is why they help their own kind as long as they consider it to be necessary and as long as they consider cooperation to be necessary it is possible for them to do something to society's benefit. However, as soon as this necessity is removed and a person feels no need, the rebellious instincts of exploitation and seeking one's own interests rise up. People prefer their own interest over that of other people to such an extent that they may sacrifice an entire nation for their own interest.

***Eighth Topic:***

One of the inevitable effects and necessities of social life is a conflict of interests and infringing on people's rights. In seeking one's own wishes, each member of society strives his utmost to gain material benefits and to be unrestrained and unbridled in satiating his desires. In order

[1]. *Ruh al-Qawanin*, p. 88.

to attain one's goals, individuals make diligent efforts to use their own kind so that they may take possession of the fruits of other people's labors and endeavors free of charge. Meanwhile, other human beings have the same instinct and strive along this same path. That is why disagreements and encroachments arise. With the existence of disagreements, society becomes disrupted and life becomes hard and unbearable.

That is why the human intellect bears witness that laws are necessary for the continued existence and happiness of society. Individuals' rights are protected, encroachment and oppression by the powerful is prevented, disagreements and disturbances are resolved, and the instincts of greed and self-seeking interests are regulated when these laws are instituted. Thus, it can be understood why humankind possessed laws and followed them to a larger or lesser extent from the early days when society was first established. The continued existence of society itself bears witness to this matter.

### *Which law makes humankind prosperous?*

There is no doubt that laws are essential for society. However, we should see which law can help humanity to reach real happiness and perfection, manage society in a good way, prevent transgression and encroachment on the rights of individuals, and ensure people's rights. It is indisputable that not every law has this capability. It must have the following requirements:

A) The law should be formulated in conformity with the real and natural needs of human beings and according to the laws of creation. It should be sufficient for all social,

political, personal, legal and ethical aspects of human beings.

B) These laws should guide humanity towards true happiness and perfection, not imaginary and illusive happiness and perfection.

C) With a wide outlook, the benefits and happiness of humanity must be taken into consideration. It should not be such that it only takes into consideration the benefits and interests of a specific group, class of people or a limited territory, while neglecting the interests of others.

D) It must firmly build the mansion of human society on the foundations of human virtues and perfections and draw attention towards this lofty, main goal. In this way people will realize that this worldly life is a means for attaining human perfection and virtues, not as a means for gaining independence and free rein.

E) It should be comprehensive and complete so that it may battle the various forms and faces of colonialism, personal and social slavery, and uproot oppression and tyranny.

F) Spiritual life must not be neglected in compiling and arranging it. It shouldn't harm people's spiritual life or divert them from the straight path towards perfection. Rather, it should create a suitable environment for the cultivation and perfection of the soul and the prevention of deviation and misguidance.

Now that we have become aware of the requirements of the laws that are needed by humanity this question arises, "Do human beings have the capacity to formulate comprehensive and complete laws which have the

aforementioned requirements and put them at the disposal of the society?"

Anyone who has paid careful attention to the previous discussion will give a negative response.

### *The Qualifications of the Legislator*

1. The legislator must be a flawless anthropologist. He needs to be aware of the secrets, mysteries and intricacies of the body and soul, as well as the sentiments, feelings, innate instincts, wishes, desires, and the particulars of human life. However, the sciences and human knowledge are imperfect and limited.

Ordinary people do not have sufficient knowledge about humanity's various needs and the laws of creation. They do not have enough information about all aspects of good and bad, places where laws contradict each other or are incompatible, the effects and ramifications of laws, actions and reactions, the exigencies of time and place, and the different innate instincts and subtleties of human existence.

2. Let's suppose the impossible, that human legislators can make laws for the management of mankind's worldly affairs. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that people do not have sufficient knowledge regarding the relationship that is in place between worldly life and spiritual life and regarding the effects that outward deeds and activities have on the soul. Even the limited knowledge that humankind has accumulated is deficient and limited.

Paying attention to the spiritual life, soul, and spirit of people are all matters which are not included in the

programs of legislators. They only seek people's success in the realm of material issues. However, there is a deep relationship between worldly and spiritual life, and it is impossible to separate the two.

3. The most that statutory human laws can do is to supervise and control the outward deeds and activities of human beings. But, they do not have the power to oversee and manage innate instincts, morals, and thoughts. Discord, transgression and lawlessness arise when deeds and actions are the products of a person's own ideas and ethics. If the law enforcers and administrators are not corrected regarding their own innate instincts and ethics, they will not be able to enforce the laws in the right manner.

4. In the preceding introduction, it was shown that the instincts of selfishness, profiteering and exploitation of one's own kind lie within the nature of human beings. Individuals prefer their own good over the good of other people in all instances. For this reason individuals who are the captives of their own selfishness do not have the ability to find ways to control other people's instincts and prevent exploitation by making new laws. Because, the legislators themselves are human beings and according to their own innate instinct, they prefer their own benefit and the benefit of their nearest and dearest ones over those of other people. It is not reasonable for them to sacrifice themselves for other people. Thus, they want the society for themselves, not themselves for the society.

Perhaps the dear readers will be surprised at this, and accuse the author of bigotry and narrow-mindedness. However, if they look more carefully and consider the

general conditions of the world including small countries and those which have been held back by the colorful and deceitful snares of powerful countries and the international community, they will surely agree with the author.

Despite the fact that human legislators are continuously endeavoring to prevent injustices and inequities by enacting new laws, making amendments to previous ones, and in this way reforming and improving the conditions and circumstances of their countrymen, have they succeeded up to this time in taking even a small step forward in containing the human tendencies and instincts towards rebellion and profiteering? Or, have they been able to at least lessen and control these to some extent?! Which depravity have they prevented without its being replaced by a worse one? Which oppression and tyranny have they abolished without it being replaced by a hundred more of its kind? Whose rights have they defended without the rights of others being trodden underfoot? Which country have they helped to prosper without destroying other countries?

For example, for thousands of years humankind has been striving to eliminate slavery. They have enacted hundreds of laws aimed at eliminating slavery, to which thousands of amendments have been made. Humanity has spent exorbitant sums of money for this cause, written and published thousands of books and magazines, and used horns and bugles to send the message to the people of the world. Outwardly, apparently, slavery has been condemned. However, I leave the affirmation or refutation of this matter to the pure conscience of the reader. Has civilized man made progress in abolishing slavery or has it

been remodeled from individual slavery into the servitude of nations?

Uncivilized man used to take one person into slavery and captivity, but civilized people make the inhabitants of one nation or several nations their bondservants and slaves. They gain predominance over their wealth and all aspects of their lives. Then through various designs they hinder them from progress and advancement.

Weak nations work night and day but are deprived of bare subsistence. The products of their labor, their national wealth, and their natural resources and reserves flow into the coffers of powerful and colonialist countries. This wealth is used for these countries international rivalries, showing off their strength, consolidating their dictatorships, taking slaves, and protecting their international standings.

If human laws are capable of regulating human's selfishness, then why are the communal riches and fortunes of underdeveloped countries concentrated in the hands of a few powerful countries? Why is the largest percentage of national budgets used to buy arms and weaponry for war? And according to Hobbes, "If it is not a part of human beings' nature to be at war, why are people always armed and why do they lock their homes with keys?[1]"

5. Human legislators compose and enact laws according to their own short-sighted and limited thinking. They mould them based on their own prejudices, habits, and narrow-mindedness. It is not possible for them to divest

[1]. *Ruh al-Qawanin*, p. 88.

themselves of their own prejudice and selfishness, and observe the benefit of humankind with a wide outlook.

That is why laws are always enacted for the benefit of a few people, a particular social class, or a specific nation. No attention is given to the good of other human beings when they are enacted. If the capitalists and rich people take the reins of power, they enact laws for their own benefit and endeavor to violate the rights of the workers and laborers. If the class of workers and laborers gains dominance, they will not desist from any unlawful action for the destruction and violation of the rights of capitalists. This is why the enactment of legislation is like the waves on the sea which are incessantly in a state of agitation, change and upheaval.

6. If people's consciences guarantee that the law will be upheld, people honestly consider themselves obliged to act upon the law, and they see themselves as sinners and offenders when they break the law, the law will be implemented more effectively. This can only be conceived with regard to Divine Laws.

### *Conclusion*

From these preliminaries, we can conclude that laws which have been formulated by short-sighted and imperfect human thinking, and which do not direct people towards true happiness and perfection cannot control the self-seeking instinct which desires the exploitation of others for one's own ends. They cannot guide people to the straight path of humanity nor guarantee their bodily and spiritual happiness in this world and the hereafter.

The making of such comprehensive and accurate laws is beyond the capacity and capability of human beings. The only one who can place such excellent and superior laws at our disposal is God, the Creator of the world. It is the Creator of human beings who is completely aware of the human structure, secrets, mysteries and intricacies of their bodies and souls. He considers their various innate instincts and sentiments, as well as their inner feelings and desires. It is God who knows what is true prosperity and perfection for the body, soul, spirit, mind, this world, and the hereafter. He is aware of the deep relationship which exists between the life of this world and the hereafter.

Before God, the Wise, all human beings are equal and are His creation. He loves all people, desires their prosperity and perfection, and is free from all kinds of ill intentions, bigotry, selfishness and narrow-mindedness. He is aware of the interaction and conflict of laws, their actions and reactions, and their effects and counter-effects.

Surely only the essence of the Lord of the worlds possesses these special distinctions and can place at humanity's disposal perfect laws for their prosperity and perfection.

It is not possible for God who brings all of creation to perfection and provides the means for their perfection to deprive humankind of this great blessing and not place at his disposal the means for attaining perfection.

It is not possible for God, who created humanity with this greatness, placed in his body and soul thousands of secrets and mysteries, and set in motion the corporeal world and material things for the benefit of humankind, to be

heedless of the ultimate goal, true prosperity, and perfection of the human race.

It should be said here that the infinite favor of God, the Glorified, necessitate that He select chosen and eligible people from among humankind. Through Divine revelation, place at their disposal a program of comprehensive and perfect laws, and send them to the people as Prophets and Messengers. In this way, they may lead humankind towards prosperity and perfection, show them the ways which lead to prosperity or wretchedness, and prepare the way for them to attain the ultimate goal.

These chosen people must be immune from error, sin and forgetfulness in order for their propagation to bear fruit and in order for the Divine Laws to be placed at the disposal of humankind without any additions or subtractions.

### *The Secret of the Superiority of Divine Laws*

The way the Prophets work is by beginning by reforming the inner being. That is to say, they first reform people's beliefs, and then embark upon reforming morals, innate instincts, and feelings. When people are ready to accept Divine commandments they place at their disposal devotional and social laws. The results which come from following this program are better and more effective, because people easily submit to laws which they believe in.

### *Objection*

The following objection may cross the reader's mind. If Divine Laws possess the aforesaid advantages, they have

the ability to manage human societies in a good manner, and they can prevent transgressions and injustices, then why haven't Islam and other heavenly religions fulfilled this responsibility and reformed human societies? Why hasn't Islam been able to forestall all the transgressions and injustices which have occurred and continue to occur among Muslims? Why hasn't it helped Islamic nations to attain this advancement? Isn't this proof that the heavenly laws cannot control human innate instincts and feelings? Nor can it subdue the rebellious nature and the inclination to take advantage of others for one's own ends.

***Response***

In response to the above objection, it must be said that it is only possible to appraise if a law is good or bad when it is enforced and acted upon in full. If it produces good results, we then say the law is perfect. But, if its results are not pleasing, we can judge that the law is imperfect. It is irrational to judge a law which has not yet been enforced to be imperfect and fruitless. This also applies to Islamic laws. When has Islamic law been enforced in full but failed to produce good results?! Can it be expected that the Islamic laws which have not yet been pulled out from books suddenly explode like time bombs, and prevent the human society from rebellion and perverseness!

Execute all the laws of Islam including its political, social, ethical, and devotional programs as a test for a short period. If the results are not satisfactory, use the laws and programs of other people to solve the problems.

Islamic laws, like other laws, need an executor. Effort, diligence, and sacrifice are needed. An environment and

system which are completely Islamic should be established. Then, enforce all the directives and programs of Islam in order to see its shining results.

In addition, it is true that the Prophets (‘a) and heavenly religions have not succeeded in reforming human society, completely preventing transgressions and injustices, and helping humankind to attain true prosperity and perfection due to the lack of aptitude and ability of the people. However, it has to be admitted that the humanity, compassion and good morals which do exist among human beings are the result of the inculcations and guidance of the Prophets (‘a). These are a result of Divine Laws and directives. If no Prophet (‘a) or religion had been sent, human societies would definitely not be in the present state. There would be no trace of compassion, love, defending the weak or other good morals and qualities. Human beings would have been like wild animals and devoid of good morals.

***Religion***

Religion is a complete social system, a series of practical and ethical laws and programs, a series of correct beliefs which have come from an external source and from reality, and has been created and formulated according to the laws of creation. It is realities which emanate from the unseen and descend upon the pure souls of Prophets (‘a). Prophets (‘a) have put these realities into words and communicated them to the people.

Religion is the path for human perfection and the straight path returning to God. Of course this path is not based on a contract or just ceremonial. This would not be

compatible with the destination. Rather, it is a real path which emanates from the divine realm. Whoever travels this path nurtures the essence of the soul and his inner being becomes perfected. After traveling these stages of perfection he will rise up and return to a spacious cosmos and lofty paradise.

If all the laws and teachings of religion were to manifest themselves in the form of one practical reality, it would be that same straight path. Similarly, if the straight path, which is the way of practical ascension and perfection, were to manifest itself in the form of a practical program, it would be the same aforementioned laws and directives.

Everyone who deviates from the straight path of religion loses the straight path of human virtues. He will find himself in the dark and deviated path of animality. The ugly qualities of animality and brutality become strengthened in him, thereby making it impossible for him to traverse the straight path of humanity. The destiny of such a person is none other than perplexity, a hard life, and falling into the valley of Hell.

## RATIONAL ARGUMENTS FOR IMAMATE

Now that the way for proving general prophethood and the necessity for sending the Prophet (s) and Divine Laws have been clarified, we will enter the discourse on Imamate. The necessity of the existence of the Imam (‘a) can be proved in two ways.

### *First Proof*

In the previous discussions it has been proven that human beings are on the path of movement and perfection. They are instinctively moving towards the final stage of human perfection. They must travel a true, existential path in order to return to the world of happiness, brightness and perfection.

This existential path has stages and degrees. Every higher stage is the goal of a lower, less complete stage. There is a connection and link between the stages which cannot be broken. The ultimate goal of human movement towards perfection is this highest stage. All human beings are inclined towards this ultimate goal and the final stage of perfection. The straight path is one reality, and there is a connection and unbreakable link between its stages. As long as humans exist, it is also necessary for the existential path, the way for human perfection, and the final goal of humankind to exist. There has to be a connection between humankind and the unseen world.

There must be a perfect human being, within whom all possible human virtues have reached actualization and fulfillment and in whom the profundity of the laws and directives of the *Shari'ah* has become a reality, among other human beings. He must convey all the stages of perfection which were revealed through the Noble Prophet (s). That chosen person has to be located on the straight path of human perfection, and not be on the path which has deviated from the path of perfection. A person who has reached to doing some good deeds but is deprived of the rest of them is not located on the straight path and is deviating from the path of Truth. If careful attention is

paid to this point here, we will see that the path and the guide are no more than one reality.

In juridical terminology, such a chosen person is called Imam. The Imam is a perfect human being who believes in all the Divine teachings with all his being, is adorned with all good morals and attributes, and acts upon all the laws and directives of the *Shari'ah*. All of the perfections which have been revealed by God and whose realization in human beings is feasible have been actualized and fulfilled in the personality of the Imam. The Imam is the locus of Divine favors and the mediator between humankind and the unseen world. He is the leader and overseer of the caravan of humanity and the final goal for the perfection of humankind. There must always be an individual among humankind who is continually guided, approved, and favored by God, the High, and by means of his inner appeal helps everyone attain favorable perfection according to his own abilities.

The holy existence of the Imam is connected with the divine world without any intermediary. The doors to unseen perfections are open to him. He lives under the direct guidance and guardianship of the Lord of the worlds.

Surely, there must always be such a leader among humankind. Otherwise, the movement towards perfection would be without an ultimate goal, and there would be no link between the divine world and humankind; if humankind does not have an ultimate goal, extinction is imminent.

I suspect that the aforesaid argument is not understandable to all readers, and they have not perceived the depth and

spirit of the matter. Of course, this is understandable because a series of exact, rational discussions which cannot be thoroughly explained here are needed to prove this matter. I ask the respectable readers to read the discourse on general prophethood carefully in this book once more and then to meticulously read this argument again considering completely its various aspects. Perhaps the issue will become clear.

***Second Proof***

It has been proven in the foregoing discussions that God, the Wise, has given people the ability to attain perfection and has prepared them for ascension and perfection. It is not possible that He would not place at their disposal the means for attaining this perfection. His infinite grace necessitates that He should place at the disposal of humanity a perfect and comprehensive code of law such that, if one acts upon it, his worldly affairs will be managed in the best possible manner, and that person will attain the eternal comfort of the Hereafter.

The program for people's worldly lives must be arranged in such a way that it does not harm their spiritual life. A good environment is needed for nurturing the spirit and soul and for the acquisition of human virtues and perfections. It is incumbent upon God, the Wise, to send such a program through His chosen Prophets (‘a).

God's objective is guaranteed when, firstly, all of the religious laws and dictates are preserved among humankind without additions or subtractions being made to them, and when they are always within people's reach. Secondly, the Divine Laws must have a guarantor for their

execution, because religion is not something separate from the world. Spiritual perfection and prosperity is connected with this worldly life. There must always be a person among humankind who strives to protect the laws of religion and to enforce the heavenly programs and agendas.

When God's Prophet (s) was alive, he himself was the guarantor and executor of the religious laws. But since the Noble Prophet (s) was not to remain alive forever, it was inevitable that there had to be an individual after him who would be in charge of protecting and enforcing the Divine Laws. It was incumbent upon God, the Wise, to appoint a person who was completely trustworthy and reliable to protect the Divine Laws. Based on this assumption, it can be said that the laws and precepts of the *Shari'ah* which were revealed to the Noble Prophet (s) have always been preserved among humankind. If people want to use them, they can. It can also be said based on this assumption that the way of human perfection and the straight path of religion, which are in fact one path, will always exist among humankind, because the chosen individual is immune from error in receiving, recording, and communicating the Divine Laws.

This chosen person is established on the straight path of religion, because he acts upon all the religious laws and is immune from sin and error. He is aware of the reality and inner facets of the religious laws, and he is an exemplary individual in whom all human perfections have reached completion. For this reason, he may be the people's Imam and leader and people can take his morals, deeds, and sayings to be their model to follow in traveling the path leading to perfection. He needs none other than God for

his education. He knows the inner facets and spirit of the religious laws. He traverses the stages of perfection, and he takes every person to the perfection they deserve by means of divine guidance, grace, and spiritual attractions. In addition, this infallible person executes religious social and political programs. He establishes a good and clean environment according to God's wish so that his society may be managed in the best way, and so that it may attain prosperity in this world and the next. This is an environment which is conducive to nurturing the soul, for acquiring virtues and perfections, and for traversing through religious teachings and spirituality.

God knows there is no separation between religion and the world. He knows it is not possible to set partitions and boundaries between programs related to bodily and spiritual life or to appoint someone separately for each part. He would not appoint two individuals to take charge of leading and ruling the people. Rather, His infinite favor and the station of His Lordship necessitates that he appoint one infallible and dependable leader. He places at his disposal the reins of both worldly and eschatological affairs, and gives him the duty of preserving and executing the laws so that he may lead people on the path which He desires. In the juridical terminology, such an eminent and infallible person is called 'Imam'.

### *First Objection*

One may say, "It is possible to imagine the absence of an infallible person among human beings and at the same time the laws and commandments of *the Shari'ah* being preserved. It is possible for a collection of all the religious laws to remain among the people. In other words, each

group should preserve a specific part of the Divine Laws and know and act upon them. Based on this assumption, all religious laws are preserved among humankind both in knowledge and practice. Also, the straight path of religion and the relationship between the unseen world and the perceivable world will remain."

***Response***

As has been previously discussed, the Divine Laws and commandments which have been revealed by God, the High, for the guidance of humankind have to be preserved, unchanged among people. All the ways for changing, falsifying, or eradicating these laws must be closed and they must be kept safe from all dangers so that people may use them. By the grace of these laws, the way to perfection, true prosperity, and well-being will remain open and at the disposal of humankind. This is only possible when the person who is protecting and guarding these laws is immune from heedlessness, forgetfulness, and sin.

However, according to the stated objection this is impossible because each and every person in a nation is fallible. Each person is susceptible to error, forgetfulness and sin in learning and acting upon the Divine Laws. The entire nation is made up of single individuals, without whom it would not exist. Therefore, when every individual among the nation is fallible and not immune from error, the whole nation will also be fallible and not immune from error. In this case Divine Laws will not be safe from change, distortion and eradication. In addition, if the individuals of a nation wished to identify the real laws of the *Shari'ah* and follow them, it would be impossible,

because they wouldn't have access to an infallible person who is trusted by all, is immune from error, and can preserve and guard the Divine Laws. For this reason, they would not know how and from where to obtain their desired rights. Consequently, they would both have to be forgiven for opposing Divine Laws and the way to perfection would be closed to them.

In addition, in accordance with this assumption no one would be on the straight path of religion, which is only one path. No one would comprehend the spirit and profound inner facets of the Divine Laws. Based on this assumption, the potential for human perfection wouldn't be fulfilled and the people's movement towards perfection would be devoid of an ultimate goal. The straight path of religion would be closed and there would be no connection between the unseen world and the perceivable world.

***Second Objection***

One might say, "The existence of an Imam is necessary and obligatory for humankind. God, the High, has appointed specific infallible leaders for the people so that they may execute religious programs and agendas, manage human society in the best way by means of the Divine Laws, and strive in the preservation and protection of the Divine Laws and dictates. However, according to your assertion that God appointed 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) and his eleven sons to be the leaders of the Muslims, God performed a vain and useless act because out of these twelve people only 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) actually occupied the seat of government. After the sad demise of the Noble Prophet (s) 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) was denied

the caliphate for some time, and his rule did not last long when he did assume it. Is it correct to say that God *appointed* twelve people to be the leaders of humankind when eleven of them never occupied the seat of government at all? Only one of the twelve appointed people ascended to government, and that was for a very brief period? Can rational people accept such a thing? Are rational people prepared to ascribe such a thing to God [that God appointed them but they never achieved this position]?"

***Response***

In the foregoing discussions it has been proven that it is necessary for God, the Wise, with His utmost Mercy to provide for the guidance and perfection of humankind by selecting infallible leaders for them and introducing these leaders to the people. In this way people may have access to an infallible guide in every era. Then, no excuse for negligence will remain for them.

In response to this objection, we say that God has done as we have stated, and He has appointed and introduced individuals as Imams and leaders who have been one hundred percent immune from error and sin. After the Noble Prophet (s), the people could benefit from these divinely chosen people for the establishment of a government of justice and equity. They could struggle and sacrifice to prepare the ground for those chosen people to be in charge. People could endeavor and work to establish and strengthen their government, then enjoy the immense benefits coming from the government of Infallible people (‘a). However, if the people were negligent of their duties, this cannot be blamed on God and the Noble

Prophet (s). Things have to happen in a normal manner and according to cause and effect. God is not duty-bound to remove the law of cause and effect and impose the government of infallible people on humanity through extra-ordinary means.

In addition, in the previous discussions it has been shown that the Imam (‘a) has not just one but a number of merits and positions.

1. He is a perfect example of humanity in whom all aspects of religion have been manifested in the best manner; and, he is an outlet of Divine Grace.

2. He is the protector of religious laws and dictates which were revealed to the Noble Prophet (s). He is the propagator and disseminator of the directives of the *Shari‘ah*.

3. He has been appointed by God, the Glorified, to be the Prophet’s successor and the leader of the Muslims.

I cannot understand why Muslims, due to various reasons, did not succeed in benefiting from this third merit. However, they have definitely benefited from the first and second merits, because the first merit is an existential and real matter and is derived from the Imam whether he assumes the seat of government or he is deprived of his legitimate right.

Innumerable benefits have also been gained by Islam and Muslims from the second position of the Imams (‘a) of the Prophet’s household. It was through their beneficial leadership and sacrifices that the essence of religion has been preserved and the schemes of the enemies have been rendered ineffective. It is a result of their existence that

thousands of traditions regarding Islamic teachings and the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an have been disseminated among the Muslims. It is through them that thousands of traditions regarding ethics and spiritual wayfaring have been placed at the disposal of those who are eager. They have put thousands of juridical traditions in the hands of the scholars. If you compare the Sunni books of traditions to the Shi'ah books of traditions, you can easily see the difference between them and see some of the academic and religious services of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). It is not necessary for one to exert strenuous effort. Just read the *Nahj al-Balagha* of ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) one time and meditate upon the deep meanings of its statements so that a bit of the academic services of the pure Imams (‘a) may become clear to you.

If you are a person of research and study and you examine the Sunni and Shi'ah books with an accurate perspective, it will become clear to you that many of the Sunni scholars of jurisprudence have acquired most of their knowledge directly or indirectly from the Imams (‘a) of the Prophet's household, and that they have benefited from the Imam's (‘a) God-given treasure of knowledge. We cannot examine and analyze this issue completely here. However, in order for you to have a brief example of what we mean, refer to the words of Ibn Abi al-Hadid, who himself was a Sunni scholar, about Imam ‘Ali (‘a):

What can I say about a person to whom all virtues are attributed, to whom all sects refer to, and whom every group considers to be one of their own. Thus, he is the head and source of all virtues. All sciences and branches of knowledge start from him. Divine philosophy, which is

the noblest science, has stemmed from the words of ‘Ali (‘a) and goes back to him.

The Mu‘tazilites, who are monotheists and believers in Divine justice, were the students of ‘Ali (‘a). Their leader was Wasil bin ‘Ata, who was a student of ‘Abdullah, who was a student of Muhammad bin Hanafiyah, who was a student of ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a). The knowledge of the Ash‘arites also stems from ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a). Their teacher was Abu al-Hasan Ash‘ari, who was a student of Abu ‘Ali Jaba’i. Abu ‘Ali Jaba’i was one of the eminent Ash‘arite scholars, and it has been previously been said that the knowledge of the Mu‘tazilites stems from ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a).

The origin of Imamate philosophy and theology, and that of the Zaydis, is a clear issue.

In the science of jurisprudence too, ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) is the teacher of all jurisprudents. Because, the jurisprudence of the Hanafis comes from Abu Hanifah, who was a student of Ja‘far bin Muhammad (‘a), who was a student of his father Muhammad bin ‘Ali (‘a), who was a student of his father ‘Ali bin Husayn bin ‘Ali (‘a), who acquired his knowledge from ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a).

The jurisprudence of the Malikis goes back to Malik bin Anas, who was a student of Rabi‘ah, who was a student of ‘Akramah, who was a student of Ibn ‘Abbas who was a student of ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a).

Likewise, ‘Umar bin Khattab and Ibn ‘Abbas, who are considered to be jurists from among the Prophet’s (s) companions, acquired knowledge from ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a). Ibn ‘Abbas’ studentship is very clear, and with

regard to ‘Umar’s studentship everyone knows that he asked ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) to solve many difficult issues. He repeatedly said, ‘If ‘Ali were not here, ‘Umar would have been destroyed.’ He also used to say, ‘There was no difficulty which was not resolved by Abu al-Hasan.’

Without a doubt the Imamate jurisprudence also goes back to ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a).

‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) was the first teacher in the science of commentary on the Holy Qur’an too. If you refer to books of commentary on the Holy Qur’an, you will see that most issues have been quoted from ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) and Ibn ‘Abbas, who was the student of ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a). Ibn ‘Abbas was asked, ‘What relationship exists between your knowledge and the knowledge of your cousin?’ He answered, ‘It is the relationship of a rain drop with respect to the sea.’

The science of Sufism, or Gnosticism, also goes back to ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a). The leaders of this science attach themselves to ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a).

The first to work in [Arabic] syntax was ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) too. It was he who taught the general rules of [Arabic] syntax to Abu al-Aswad for the first time.[1]

A thorough study of the life of Imam Sadiq (‘a) and the sciences he disseminated in Islamic countries and lands, as well as the number of scholars who acquired knowledge from him, suffices to prove this matter. Ibn Shahr Ashub has written:

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[1]. *Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, vol. 1, p. 18.

The traditions which have been transmitted from Imam Sadiq (‘a) have not been transmitted from anyone else. Almost four thousand students acquired knowledge from him. A number of religious scholars such as: Malik bin Anas, Sha‘bah bin Hajjaj, Safiyan Thuri, Ibn Jarih, ‘Abdullah bin ‘Amr, Ruh bin Qasim, Safiyan bin ‘Ainah, Sulayman bin Bilal, Isma’il bin Ja‘far, Hatam bin Isma’il, ‘Abdul‘aziz bin Mukhtar, Wahab bin Khalid and Ibrahim bin Tahan all acquired knowledge from Imam Sadiq (‘a). His other students included: Shafi‘i, Hasan bin Salih, Abu Ayub Sajistani, ‘Umar bin Dinar and Ahmad bin Hanbal.[1]

Ibn Sabaqh has written, ‘Many sciences were disseminated among the Muslims from Imam Sadiq (‘a). The traditions which have been narrated from him have not been narrated from the other members of the Prophet’s household (‘a). A number of the great scholars of Islam such as: Yahya bin Sa‘id, Ibn Jarih, Malik bin Anas, Thuri, Abu ‘Ainah, Abu Hanifah, Sha‘bah and Abu Ayub Sajistani learnt from him.’[2]

With regards to Imam Sadiq (‘a), Jahid has said, ‘The knowledge of Ja‘far bin Muhammad has filled the world, and Safiyan Thuri and Abu Hanifah are two of his students.’[3]

It has also been narrated that Ibn Hijr Haythami wrote the following about Imam Sadiq (‘a), ‘Many sciences were disseminated from Imam Sadiq (‘a) among the Muslims. The traditions which have been narrated from him have

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1. *Manaqib Ibn Shahr Ashub*, vol. 4, p. 247.
2. *Al-Fusul al-Mahmah*, vol. 2, p. 909.
3. *Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba‘ah*, vol. 1, p. 55.

not been narrated from the other members of the Prophet's household. A number of the great scholars of Islam such as: Yahya bin Sa'id, Ibn Jarih, Malik bin Anas, Thuri, Abu 'Ainah, Abu Hanifah, Sha'bah and Abu Ayub Sajistani learnt from him.'[1]

It has been narrated that Muhammad bin Tahir wrote, ''Abdulwahab Thaqafi, Hatam bin Isma'il, Wahab bin Khalid, Hasan bin 'Ayash, Sulayman bin Bilal, Safiyan Thuri, Darwardi, Yahya bin Sa'id, Hafs bin Ghiyath, Malik bin Anas and Ibn Jarih were some of the people who acquired knowledge from Imam Sadiq ('a).'[2]

### *Third Objection*

The following has been written, 'The caliph must strive to make himself acceptable to the people. He has to conduct himself with those who have gone astray in the same way that the Noble Prophet (s) did and guide them to the right path. Are the people at fault when the divine caliph remains aloof and denies his own caliphate? I wonder why, out of twelve Imams, only 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) assumed the seat of the caliphate and no one save Husayn bin 'Ali ('a) rose up to take charge of it. Hasan bin 'Ali ('a) attained the caliphate but relinquished it. 'Ali bin Husayn ('a) was so reclusive and evasive of the caliphate that when the people of Medina rebelled against Yazid in the year 63 AH, he withdrew and left the city.'[3]

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1. *Ibid*, p. 56.
2. *Ibid*, p. 57.
3. *Ahmad Kusrawi, Dawari*, p. 28.

***Response***

It is true that God's vicegerent must strive to assume the position he has been appointed to. However, his acts have to be in complete accordance with reason and precaution while protecting the real expediencies of Islam at the same time. He has to thoroughly examine the condition and limits of the people's readiness [to support him]. It is then that he has to make any move he deems appropriate for the attainment of his true position. It is far from fair to expect our religious leaders to do things that rational people would not accept and which would not produce victory.

Despite the fact that he was the rightful caliph after the Noble Prophet (s) and asserted that his right had been usurped, Imam 'Ali ('a) was not ready to rise up against the usurping caliphate. Not only did he refrain from resorting to extremist actions, but he was also continually willing to help and guide [the caliphs]. He considered the continued existence of religion and the good of Islam to be of a greater importance.

At the same time he defended his right on suitable occasions. He awakened the people's slumbering thoughts through rational proofs and speeches, and thus prepared the grounds for his caliphate.

Imam Hasan ('a) assumed the seat of the caliphate after his great father. However, Mu'awiyah opposed him, because he had planned out his government in Damascus, Syria and prepared the ground for [himself] through hundreds of schemes and tricks for a long time. In order to protect the Divine seat, Imam Hasan ('a) prepared for war, made speeches, and encouraged the people to take part in holy war. A large army was assembled against the Syrian

army. However, when he analyzed the morale of the soldiers in opposition to Mu‘awiyah’s schemes and discovered the treachery of some of the generals of his army, he opted for making a treaty over war.

Imam Hasan (‘a) realized that although he had many soldiers, they were divided and disunited. He understood that there were many supporters of Mu‘awiyah among them. They had even promised Mu‘awiyah to take Imam Hasan (‘a) into custody and hand him over to the enemy. Imam Hasan (‘a) perceived that going into war with such a divided and hypocritical army would result in certain defeat. In addition, he knew a war would result in internal rivalries and civil wars which may cause many of his loyal Shi’ah and transmitters of the knowledge of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) to be killed.

Imam Hasan (‘a) saw that Mu‘awiyah had deceived the people through pretension, trickery and cunningness, and that he had falsely introduced himself as a supporter of religion and a defender of the oppressed. In spite of such claims he had no aim other than obtaining the position of leadership. The people too had been tricked. For these and other reasons, Imam Hasan (‘a) deemed it more suitable to sign a peace treaty with Mu‘awiyah. He temporarily relinquished power to him based on certain, specific conditions in order to make known to the people Mu‘awiyah’s wicked personality and sinister designs. He was also preparing the ground for a fundamental revolution. Anyone who reads the story of Imam Hasan’s peace treaty with Mu‘awiya carefully will concur that he employed the utmost diligence and endeavored for the protection of the Divine seat. Considering the conditions

at that time, the best course of action was the signing of a peace treaty.[1]

Is it not unfair that the biased writer has overlooked the conditions and circumstances of the time and has said that Hasan bin ‘Ali (‘a) attained the caliphate but relinquished it?!

Mu‘awiyah had cut off all opposition by killing the Shi’ahs and assassinating some of the great personalities of Islam. After him, his son Yazid, who was a selfish and proud youth intoxicated with power and position, proved to all the people of the world in practice that the dictatorial regime of Bani Umayyah was willing to commit the most disgraceful crimes by killing the Noble Prophet’s beloved grandson Imam Husayn (‘a). He also murdered the Imam’s (‘a) companions and children, and took the families which had accompanied him captive. What else could Imam Sajjad (‘a) have done in that treacherous environment of terror and fear? Despite the situation, he fought against oppression and injustice to the extent that overall conditions permitted. For instance, read the following letter he wrote to one of the scholars by the name of Zuhri at that time:

*Consider which party you will join when you inevitably stand before Allah Who will ask you, ‘How did you act upon My graces? How did you inform the people about My proofs? Never think that Allah will accept your excuses or be satisfied with your offenses. Far be it [from Him]! Far be it [from Him]! It is definitely not such. In His book, Allah has held scholars accountable, saying,*

[1]. Refer to: *Al Yasin, the Peace Treaty of Imam Hasan (‘a)*.

*"You shall explain it for the people, and you shall not conceal it."*[1]

You should know that the least of the rights which was obscured, and the lightest burden that you carry is entertaining fondness for an unjust person. By seeking nearness to him and responding to his invitation, you have paved the way for his going astray. I am afraid you will confess your sins on the Day of Resurrection along with the betrayers and be responsible for whatever you have obtained due to helping an oppressor; because, you have taken property which was not your right to take. You have become close to one who does not grant the rights of others. By becoming close to him, you have failed to disapprove of his invalid acts, and you have established friendship with one who antagonizes Allah. Isn't it true that the unjust ones invited you and made you the axis of the hand-mill for their wrongdoings?

You have become a bridge over which they cross to their misfortunes and a ladder they climb to deviation. You have been the propagandist of their misdirection and followed them. They made you doubt the Shi'ah scholars and employed you as a means through which they dragged the hearts of the ignorant towards themselves. The best minister in their government and the most powerful of them could not achieve the same success in hiding their corruptness that you have attained. They have not had the success you have had in attracting the attention of the privileged and the masses.

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[1]. *Qur'an* 3:187.

If you compare what you have done for them with what they have given to you, you will find what you have achieved to be insignificant. What they have facilitated for you is very trivial, while only God knows what they have ruined for you.

Watch out for yourself! For no one will look after you but you. Take account of your actions like a responsible person.[1]

It is also not true that Imam Sajjad (‘a) remained quiet with regards to oppressors or that he adopted reclusion. Rather, he discharged this duty when the conditions and circumstances were suitable. The truth may be perceived if we look at his letters and traditions. Imam Sajjad (‘a) performed the same duties that other Imams did; but, he did this by means of supplications and prayers. Take a look at Sahifah al-Sajjadiyah in order for the truth to become apparent to you. Is it not unfair that one biased writer has said, ‘Ali bin Husayn (‘a) was so reclusive and evasive of the caliphate that when the people of Medina rebelled against Yazid in the year 63 AH, he withdrew and left the city’?!

If the pure Imams (‘a) had no intention of obtaining the caliphate, why did ‘Abd al-Malik Marwan arrest Imam Sajjad (‘a) and take him to Damascus in chains and fetters?

And why did Hisham bin ‘Abd al-Malik summon Imam Sajjad (‘a) from Medina to Damascus and reprimand him?

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[1]. *Tahuf al-‘Uqul*, pp. 323-324.

And why did Mansur Dawaniqi summon Imam Sajjad (‘a) from Medina to Iraq and rebuke and censure him; and, time and again he decided to kill him but then changed his mind?

And why did Musa bin Ja‘far (‘a) spend most of his blessed life in the prisons of Mahdi Abbasi, Hadi and Harun al-Rashid. Why was he eventually poisoned in Harun al-Rashid’s prison?

And why did the agents of Mutawakil ‘Abbasi climb the wall of the house of Imam ‘Ali Naqi (‘a) at night, search his house, and take him to Baghdad during the night? Why was he under surveillance for over eleven years in Samarra? And why did Mutawakkil ‘Abbasi keep deciding to kill him and changing his mind, until he was finally poisoned by Mu‘tamid Abbasi?

And why was Imam Hasan ‘Askari (‘a) kept under surveillance on a military base in Samarra, sometimes imprisoned, and later buried there? And why was his house searched after his death?!

Do you imagine that the caliphs used to pressure, kill and exile Shi’ah Imams (‘a) because they explained the Islamic laws to the people? I do not think this was the case. If you carefully read the biographies of the Imams (‘a) and the conduct of the caliphs of their time, it will become clear to you that they were not seekers of ease and pleasure, and they were never remiss in performing their duties. They used to endeavor to disseminate religious laws and sciences, and when necessary, they awakened the people to fight oppression.

### *Fourth Objection*

What benefit can you cite for the existence of the twelfth Imam who has been absent (i.e. in occultation) from the beginning? What problem has he solved? What permissible (halal) and forbidden (haram) things has he explained to the people? If the Imam is the leader of the people, then he should live among the people and guide them. What is the point of having an invisible Imam?

### *Response*

As has been stated previously, it may be said that three benefits are derived from the existence of the Imam.

1. He is a perfect human being in whom all virtues and perfections have reached actualization, and he is the medium for Divine favors.

2. He is the protector and disseminator of Divine Laws and directives.

3. He is the leader and administrator of the social affairs of the Muslims.

It can be inferred from the rational argument of the Imamate and the traditions which have been quoted in this respect that the Imam is the most perfect of all human beings. He is a perfect example of religion in whom all religious realities and perfections are manifested in completely and in whom the reality and inner facet of Divine Laws have reached actualization. The Imam is the ultimate goal of humankind and the means for ascension towards perfection. He is the outlet for Divine favors and the instructor of human beings. He is the most perfect human being who acts as a connection between the

corporeal and incorporeal worlds. Without the existence of the Imam, there would be no connection between the material world and the world of creation. Extinction is the sure end of humankind without a goal. It is clear that in deriving benefit from this important effect, there is no difference between the presence and absence of the Imam.

Regarding the other benefits, it seems the general populace is deprived of them during the occultation. However, there is no prohibition of grace from God and the Imam. God has fulfilled His duty by creating an infallible leader and has made him known to the people. The Imam of the Era too is ready for any kind of sacrifice and general reforms. However, it is human beings who have been remiss of their duty. If they remove hindrances to his re-appearance and prepare the prerequisites for the government of Divine Laws, if they prepare world opinion for the acceptance of Divine Laws, and if they prove to humankind the value and benefits of Divine programs, the Imam of the Era will re-appear and confer innumerable advantages upon human society. He will bring the luminous benefits of the government of an infallible leader.[1]

### *Fifth Objection*

You say that during the occultation of the twelfth Imam (‘aj), human beings do not have any responsibility to form a government and choose a leader. They have to live without a government, and they don’t recognize any government at all. Can such an irrational situation be accepted?!

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[1]. *Dadgostar Jahan*, Ibrahim Amini.

***Response***

What has been said up to now is no more than that God, the Wise, has selected individuals who are immune from any kind of sin and error specifically for leadership. He has asked the people to provide the means for the establishment of their government and follow these individuals. We have not and do not want to say that during the occultation of the Imam of the Era, when the people have no access to an infallible guide, when the people are not ready for the acceptance of the government of an infallible person, and when the system and means are not at hand, the people have to altogether forsake every government and never submit to any government at all living without any leader and government and having no responsibility in this respect. We have not made such a statement at all, and it is incorrect to say such a thing. All nations and people agree unanimously that it is impossible to live in chaos and without the existence of a government. Every rational person knows that if there is no leader or governor among people to establish general order and security, forestall transgressions, and manage social affairs, social order becomes disrupted and life becomes impossible.

On the other hand, anyone who thinks a bit understands that human beings have been created free. No one has the right to interfere in the personal and social affairs of other people, decide for them, and tell them what to do and what not to do. No one has the right to decide for another, and no one owns another person. No one has the right to dominate another through the use of force and coercion and then say, ‘I am your leader, and only I have the right

to say what is good or bad for you. You cannot disobey my orders.'

The human intellect understands that it is only God, the Great, who has the right to decide for humanity, tell His creations what to do and what not to do, intercede in their lives, and give them orders because He is the Creator and Owner of all human beings.

If God has such a right and He gives this responsibility to a person, then that person too becomes a person of authority and influence. This person will have the right to decide on behalf of other people, and tell them what to do and what not to do. It was previously proven that God, the Wise, has given this governorship to the infallible Imams and those chosen people are the official leaders and governors of Muslims. They have the right to intercede in all the personal and social affairs of the nation.

At the same time, each person is also his own leader and the manager of his own affairs. This gives him the right to act according to his own desires and will, and to decide for his own personal and social affairs. If in this regard another person becomes an inconvenience, that other person is considered to be an oppressor and tyrant. In addition, people believe they have the right to have an assistant to help them in the things they are not able to do, the right to dictate their assistant's work, and to give him orders about what he can and cannot do.

Because the existence of a government is one of the necessary demands of social life, people have the right to consciously choose a leader and governor for the management of their social affairs and consider themselves duty bound to act according to his orders. If

the people of a society are rational, they will never lose this right.

Truly, this issue is something that human reason accepts and all people and nations unanimously agree upon it. Islam too has not forsaken this universal custom and would not be pleased at all to see the Muslim people without a government allowing every any unfit and oppressive person to assume leadership and take the reins of power. Islam has political and social laws and dictates, and government has been placed at the center of religion. In addition, the enforcement of the laws and directives of the *Shari'ah* has been placed on the shoulders of Muslims. Like other nations and people, Muslims cannot live without a government. If they have access to an infallible Imam, they must strive and endeavor to establish and strengthen his government so that the luminous laws of Islam may be enforced under the auspices of his leadership. If they do not have access to an infallible leader and Imam, even then they cannot live without a suitable government. Rather, they have the duty to elect a pious person who is well versed in Islam, politics and public administration. They should strive to establish and strengthen his government so that the laws and directives of the *shari'ah* are enforced and so that justice and equity are established. In this way they can help to bring about an example of a government of the pious, making the people more desirous of Islam, and preparing the grounds for the government of an infallible person.

A discourse on Islamic government is a broad and difficult topic which cannot be covered thoroughly here. A complete discussion on this topic calls for a separate book.

## THE NECESSITY FOR AN IMAM FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE TRADITIONS

According to many traditions which have been quoted from the Noble Prophet (s) and the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), the existence of an Imam is necessary for the continued existence of humankind. As long as humankind exists on earth, there must also be an Imam and Divine proof among them. There are many traditions on this issue which are either successive[1] [*mutawatir*] or definitive [*qat’i al-sudur*] narrations. For example:

1. Sulayman A‘mash said, ‘Imam Sadiq (‘a) narrated from his fathers that Imam Sajjad (‘a) said, “From the time that God created Adam, the earth has never been devoid of a Divine proof who was either apparent and well known or absent and unseen. It will never be devoid of a Divine proof until the Day of Resurrection. God will not be worshipped if there is no Imam.”’ Sulayman A‘mash said he asked Imam Sadiq (‘a), ‘How do people derive benefit from an absent Imam?’ Imam Sadiq (‘a) responded, ‘They derive benefit from the unseen Imam just as they derive benefit from the sun when it is behind a cloud.’[2]

2. ‘Abdullah bin Sulayman ‘Amiri quoted Imam Sadiq (‘a) as saying, ‘The earth has never been devoid of a Divine proof so that he may teach the people the halal

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[1]. A successive narration is one conveyed by narrators so numerous that it is not conceivable that they have agreed upon an untruth thus being accepted as unquestionable in its veracity. [See Hadith terminology, Wikipedia—Ed.]

[2]. *Yanabi‘ al-Mawadah*, vol. 1, p. 75.

(permissible) and the haram (prohibited) and guide them to the straight path.'[1]

3. Abu Basir quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, 'God is too great to leave the earth without the presence of a just Imam.'[2]

4. Abu al-'Ala reported, 'I asked Imam Sadiq ('a) whether it was possible for the world to be without a just Imam. He answered, "No."'[3]

5. Abu Basir narrated that either Imam Sadiq ('a) or Imam Baqir ('a) said, 'God has never left the earth without a scholar. If this were not so, the truth would not be distinguishable from falsehood.'[4]

6. Abu Hamzah quoted Imam Baqir ('a) as saying, 'I swear by God that from the time when He created Adam, He has never left the earth without an Imam. The Imam guides the people towards Allah and is a Divine proof to His servants. In the future too the earth will never be without an Imam so that he may be a Divine proof to His servants.'[5]

7. Abu Hamzah reported, 'I asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "Is it possible for the world to be without an Imam?" He answered, "The earth would crumble and collapse if an Imam was not present."'[6]

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1. *Usul Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 178.
2. *Ibid*.
3. *Ibid*.
4. *Ibid*.
5. *Ibid*, p. 179.
6. *Ibid*, p. 179.

8. Muhammad bin Fudayl said he asked Imam Rida (‘a), ‘Can the earth continue without an Imam?’ Imam Rida (‘a) answered in the negative. Muhammad bin Fudayl said that it was also related to him that Imam Sadiq (‘a) had said that the earth cannot endure without an Imam because the dwellers of the earth would incur God’s wrath. Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, ‘The earth will never be devoid of an Imam. If there is no Imam, the earth will crumble and collapse.’ [1]

9. Abu Hamzah has narrated that Imam Baqir (‘a) said, ‘O Abu Hamzah! One who intends to go on a trip is willing to go several farsakhs[2] in order to find a guide for himself, whereas you are more uninformed about the ways of the heavens than the ways of the earth. Therefore, seek out a guide for yourself.’[3]

10. Hasan bin ‘Ali (‘a) stated, ‘From the time when God created Adam up to the Day of the Resurrection, the earth will never be devoid of a Divine proof. Misfortunes are removed from the earth because of the presence of an Imam, the rains of mercy pour down, and the blessings of the earth bear fruit.’[4]

11. Ibn Tayar reported that he heard Imam Sadiq (‘a) saying, ‘As long as there is more than one person on the earth, one of them will definitely be an Imam.’[5]

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1. *Ibid*, p. 179.
2. A legal farsakh is a little less than 5 1/2 kilometers. ed.
3. *Ithbat al-Hudah*, vol. 1, p. 155.
4. *Ibid*, p. 218.
5. *Usul Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 179.

12. Kiram narrated that Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, ‘As long as there are more than two people on the earth, one of them will be an Imam. The last person who will depart the earth is the Imam, so that no one will have any argument against God that they were left without an Imam.’[1]

13. Yunis bin Ya‘qub reported he heard Imam Sadiq (‘a) saying, ‘If there is more than one person on the earth, then one of them will definitely be an Imam.’[2]

14. Fudayl reported, “I asked Imam Sadiq (‘a) the meaning of the verse ﴿وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ﴾. He answered, ‘Each Imam is a guide to the people of his time.’”[3]

15. Abu Muhammad related, “I asked Imam Sadiq (‘a) the meaning of the verse:

﴿ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنْذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ﴾

He said, ‘The Messenger of God warned the people, and ‘Ali guided them. Oh Aba Muhammad! Is there someone to guide nowadays?’ I said, ‘Yes, there has always been a guide from among you, and now you occupy this position.’ He said, ‘May God have mercy upon you, Aba Muhammad! If a verse is revealed to a person and that person dies, the verse does not die with that person otherwise the book will be a dead book. No, this is not what happens. The Qur’an is alive. In the same way that it flowed in the past, it will flow in the future too.’”[4]

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1. *Ibid*, p. 180.
2. *Ibid*, p. 180.
3. *Ibid*, p. 191.
4. *Ibid*, p. 192.

16. Abu Basir reported that Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, “The Prophet’s (s) successors are the doors to communication with God. If they did not exist, God wouldn’t be known. They are His proofs for His servants.”[1]

17. Abu Khalid Kabuli related, “I asked Imam Baqir (‘a) the interpretation of the verse:

﴿ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالنُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْنَا ﴾

He answered, ‘Oh Abu Khalid! I swear to God, that is the light of the Imam. Oh Abu Khalid, the light of the Imam in the heart of a Believer is brighter than the light of the sun. It is the Imams who illuminate the hearts of the Believers. God covers the light of the Imams from reaching the heart of whomever He wishes, and such a person’s heart remains dark.’”[2]

18. Harith bin Mughayrah narrated that Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, “The earth will not remain without the presence of a religious scholar whom the people have need of, but this person is not in need of them. He teaches them what is permissible and what is forbidden.”[3]

19. Ishaq bin Ghalib narrated that Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, “God and His Prophet have determined who will be the Imams, so that they may be proofs for the people. The Imams are a connection between the earth and the heavens, and by way of them God’s blessings are not cut off. God does not accept the deeds of His servants without the guardianship of the Imams. God does not leave people

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1. *Ibid*, p. 193.
2. *Ibid*, p. 195.
3. *Ithbat al-Hudat*, vol. 1, p. 245.

in bewilderment after He has guided them. He shows them the path of piety and completes His blessings upon them."[1]

20. Zurarah and Fudayl related that Imam Baqir ('a) said, "The knowledge which was revealed to Adam will not be lost. It is inherited by the people. 'Ali bin Abi Talib was a scholar of this nation. Any time a scholar from amongst us passes away another scholar replaces him."[2]

21. Muhammad bin Muslim narrated from Imam Sadiq ('a) that he said, "God's proof must exist before the creation of humankind, with him, and after him."[3]

22. 'Ala' bin Sayabah related that Imam Sadiq ('a) said about the meaning of the verse:

﴿ إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ ﴾

"Surely the Holy Qur'an guides people towards the Imam."[4]

23. Abu Basir related that Imam Baqir ('a) said about the meaning of the verse:

﴿ فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا ﴾

"Religion means Guardianship (wilayat)."[5]

24. 'Amar Sabati said, "I asked Imam Sadiq ('a) the meaning of the verse:

﴿ أَفَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ كَمَنْ بَاءَ بِسَخَطٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَأْوَاهُ
جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ۝ هُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ﴾

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1. *Ibid*, p. 247.
2. *Usul Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 222.
3. *Akmal al-Din,* vol. 1, p. 232.
4. *Usul Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 216.
5. *Ibid*, p. 418.

He answered, 'Those who follow that which God is satisfied with are Imams. I swear to God, the Imam determines the level of the Believers. By way of our (the Imams ('a)) Guardianship, and the people's understanding of us God increases people's deeds and raises their level.'"[1]

25. Imam Sadiq ('a) delivered a sermon and said, "God illuminated the religion and manifested the springs of His knowledge by way of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). Whoever knows the Imams obligatory rights will taste the sweetness of faith. He will also understand the goodness and beauty of Islam, because God has made the Imams to be guides and proofs for the people. He has placed a crown of glory on their heads, and His light has encompassed their beings. He has confirmed them with a heavenly power and effect which never finishes. The blessings of the Exalted God do not reach His servants except by way of His instruments. God does not accept the knowledge of His servants except by way of knowledge of the Imams. The Imam knows the difficulties of revelation, the dilemmas involved with the Sunnah, and the ambiguous decrees. God chooses the Imams from among the descendants of Imam Husayn ('a). Whenever an Imam passes away, God appoints another Imam from his descendants, so that he may be a clear guide and a shining argument for the people. They are leaders from God who guide the people to the truth and judge with the truth. They are the chosen from among the descendants of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Ismail. They are the best of the Prophet's Household. God created the essence of their

[1]. *Ibid*, p. 430.

being in the World of Dhar[1] and to the right of His Throne. They were hidden in the unseen world. God had them bring life to the people, and they are the pillars of Islam."[2]

26. Abu Salt Harawi narrated that Imam Rida ('a) said, "The Imam is a universe alone. No one reaches his station or rank. No scholar is equal to him. A substitute cannot be found for him. There is no one similar to or resembling him. All virtues are gathered within him. He has not gained these virtues by way of asking for them or by earning them. God has bestowed them upon him. Who can know the Imam and choose him?

Alas! Alas! The intellect is confounded, wisdom distraught, the mind perplexed, the eyes blind, the elders small, the sages inadequate, the orators and poets unable, the literary men incompetent, and the eloquent are ignorant and unable to say one of the distinctions or virtues of the Imam. They never can. All intellects confess to their incapability and weakness. How can one describe the Imam, discover the essence of his being, or understand any of his affairs?!

Where can a substitute be found for him? How and where can the praise of those who praise him or the description of those who describe him reach to his height? How can such a rank and station be understood and chosen? How

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[1]. The World of Dhar is said to be arealm where the testimony of monotheism of all creation was taken [Pr.]
[2]. *Yanabi' al-Mawadah*, vol. 1, p. 80 – 81.

can people's reason interfere in such a difficult task, and where can someone like the Imam be found?"[1]

27. Imam 'Ali said, "The Household of Muhammad are like the stars in the skies. Whenever one of them sets, another star rises."[2]

28. 'Umar bin Thabit related from his father who related from Imam Baqir ('a) that he said, "If the earth remains without the presence of an Imam for one day, the earth will swallow its inhabitants, and God will punish them with the severest of punishments. God has placed us to be proofs for the world and safety for its inhabitants. As long as we are among them they are safe from being engulfed. Whenever God wishes to destroy them and not give them any more time, he will remove us from among them. Then He will do whatever He wishes."[3]

29. 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) said, "The earth will never be empty of an upright one who arises for God and is His proof. He is either apparent and known or concealed and hidden, so that the arguments of God will not be nullified. I swear to God, they are small in number but great in value and station. God protects His arguments and reasons by way of them, so that they may deposit these reasons with others like themselves to grow and increase in the hearts. Their knowledge has brought them to true insight and vision, and it has connected them to the spirit of certainty. That which those who are enamored with wealth and money has made difficult for them is easy in their opinion.

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1. *Ibid*, p. 82.
2. *Nahj al-Balagha*, p. 146, sermon no. 100.
3. *Dala'il al-Imamat*, p. 231.

They are accustomed to that which the ignorant are in fear of. They live in bodies in this world but their souls are connected with the celestial. They are God's vicegerents on earth and invite to His religion."[1]

30. Jabir related that he asked Imam Baqir ('a), "Why do people need prophets and Imams?" He answered, "The existence of prophets and Imams is necessary for the continuation and goodness of the world. If a prophet or Imam is present among humankind, God will remove His punishment from them.

God says in the Qur'an, 'Oh Muhammad, as long as you are among the people punishment will not descend upon them.' And, the Messenger of God has said, 'In the same way that the stars are a security for those who are in the skies, my Household is a place of security for those who are on the earth. When the stars are destroyed, unpleasant occurrences will take place. When my Household is not among the people, bad occurrences will take place for those who are on the earth.'

What is meant by his Household is the Imams whom God has said it is necessary to obey in the same way that it is necessary to obey Him. He has said (in the Qur'an), 'O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you.'

The Household of the prophet are those who are vested with authority and are immaculate and pure. They do not sin or transgress. They are confirmed by God. They do good deeds, and they are on the straight path. Due to the

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[1] *Yanabi' al-Mawadah*, vol. 1, p. 89; *Nahj al-Balagha,* p. 497, sermon no. 147.

blessing of their existence God bestows sustenance upon His servants, makes the cities habitable, sends rain from the skies, brings forth the blessings from the earth, and doesn't bring down punishment upon the sinners.

The Holy Spirit (*ruh al-qudus*) does not separate from them. They are not separate from the Qur'an, and the Qur'an is not separate from them."[1]

31. Dharih Maharibi related that he heard Imam Sadiq ('a) say, "I swear to God, from the time that Adam's soul left this world God has not left the earth without an Imam. He (the Imam ('a)) guides people towards God and is a proof for them. Whoever abandons him will be destroyed. Whoever obeys him will be prosperous."[2]

32. Imam Rida ('a) said, "There are several reasons why God, the Exalted, appointed those vested with authority (*sahiban amr*) and ordered people to obey them. One of the reasons is that He had sent specific laws and injunctions for humankind; and, people should not transgress these laws of the *Shari'ah*. This was impossible unless a trustworthy person was placed over the people to execute the practical laws and prevent illegal deeds. None of the people of a nation are prepared to ignore their own pleasures and benefit in order to prevent the corruption of others if there is no one to watch over them. That is why God designated a guardian for them so as to prevent corruption and to uphold His laws and limits.

Another reason is that it is impossible to find a sect or nation which can live without a head of state and leader.

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1. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 19.
2. *Ibid*, p. 23.

All people need a leader for their worldly and spiritual affairs. This is why it is illogical for God to leave the people without a leader when He knows that a leader is needed for conducting and correcting their affairs. He must specify a leader for them so that by way of him they may fight their enemies and divide the public wealth. This leader must lead the Friday and congregational prayers and defend those who have been oppressed.

Another reason is that if an Imam and leader who protects the Divine Laws for the people is not specified, the civilizations of nations will be lost, religion will be destroyed, the customs and laws of the religion will be distorted and changed, heretics will bring innovations into the religion, and irreligious people will violate the religious laws. In this way affairs will become confusing for the Muslims. Because, people are incomplete and needy, have differences of opinion, and have various desires and circumstances. Therefore, if God does not specify a leader for the people who will protect the commands of the prophet, the *Shari'ah*, traditions and Divine Laws will become distorted. Then, all of creation will become corrupted."[1]

33. Fudayl bin Yasar related that he heard Imam Sadiq ('a) say, "The knowledge which has descended upon Adam from God will not be lost. It will remain among the people by way of inheritance. The knowledge and relics which are in connection with the prophets but not through the channel of the Ahl al-Bayt are invalid. 'Ali ('a) is the scholar of this nation. Whenever one of us

[1]. *Ibid*, p. 32.

scholars passes away, he leaves a successor who has his knowledge."[1]

34. Yunis bin Ya'qub reported, "I saw a group of the companions surrounding Imam Sadiq ('a) such as: Hamran bin 'Ain, Muhammad bin Na'man, Hisham bin Salim, Tayar, and others. One of those who were with Imam Sadiq ('a) was a young man by the name of Hisham bin Hakam. Imam Sadiq ('a) told him, 'O Hisham! Will you describe the debate you had with 'Amr bin 'Ubayd for us?' He said, 'O son of the Messenger of God! I am shy before your greatness. My tongue is unable to speak before you.' Imam Sadiq ('a) said, 'When we give you an order obey us.'

(Hisham related the following story.) I received news that 'Amr bin 'Ubayd is sitting in the Basrah Mosque and speaking for the people. This matter was significant to me. I decided to go to Basrah and debate with him. It was a Friday when I entered Basrah. I went to the Mosque. I saw 'Amr bin 'Ubayd with a large group of people surrounding him. People asked questions, and he answered.

I broke through the lines of people and sat in a corner. I told 'Amr, 'O scholarly man! I am a stranger here. Will you permit me to ask a question?' He said, 'Yes, ask.'

-Do you have eyes?

-My little boy! What kind of question is this? Why do you ask something which you yourself can see?

-My questions are of this kind.

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[1]. *Ibid*, p. 39.

-Although your questions are foolish, it is alright. Ask and I will answer.

-Do you have eyes?

-Yes.

-What do you do with your eyes?

-I see colors and people with them.

-Do you have a nose?

-Yes.

-What do you do with it?

-I smell with it.

-Do you have a mouth and tongue?

-Yes.

-What do you do with them?

-I taste foods with them.

-Do you have ears?

-Yes.

-What do you do with your ears?

-I hear sounds.

-Do you have a heart?

-Yes.

-What do you do with your heart?

-I receive information from the senses and discern between the information.

-Aren't you able to do this using your senses and without your heart?

-No.

-Your organs and senses are healthy, so why do you need your heart?

-When the limbs and senses doubt about something, they refer it to the heart, so that the doubt may be eliminated and certainty be obtained.

-So, God created the heart to remove doubts from the organs and to gain knowledge?

-Yes.

-So, certainty and knowledge cannot be gained without the heart?

-No.

-O 'Amr! God did not leave your organs and senses without an Imam (leader). Is it possible that He would leave people in confusion, doubts, and disagreements without placing an Imam and leader for him to solve their difficulties?

'Amr was quiet and unable to answer my question. Then he looked at me and said, 'Are you Hisham bin Hakam?'

-No.

-Are you an associate of his?

-No.

-Where are you from?

- Kufa.

-So, you are Hisham himself.

Then he hugged me, sat me in his place, and refused to speak as long as I was seated there.

When Imam Sadiq ('a) had heard his story, he smiled and said, 'Who did you learn this way of debating from?' He said, 'I heard the substance of this talk from you, and I

organized it.' He ('a) said, 'By God, this very matter is in the books of Abraham and Musa.'"[1]

35. Abu 'Ubaydah related that he told Imam Sadiq ('a), "I saw Salim bin Abi Hafsah and he said, 'Don't you say that whoever dies without knowing the Imam of his time has died a death of ignorance?' I said, 'Yes.' He said, 'Imam Baqir ('a), who was your Imam, has passed away. Who is your Imam now?' Since I didn't wish to introduce you as the Imam I answered, 'My Imam has always been from the Household of Muhammad.' He told me, 'You have not done the right thing.'

Imam Sadiq ('a) said, 'Woe to Salim. May he be far from God's mercy! Is Salim aware of the level and station of the Imam? The station and rank of the Imam is greater than that which Salim and other people think. Whenever one of us passes away, he leaves someone who has his knowledge, who behaves in the same way, and who invites the people to the same thing that the previous Imam invited to. God did not deprive Hadrat[2] Sulayman of the knowledge and perfection which he had bestowed upon Hadrat Dawud. He even gave him more.'"[3]

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1. *Usul Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 169.
2. *Hadrat* is a term of respect used when referring to esteemed personages. [Ed.]
3. *Ikmal al-Din*, vol. 1, p. 230.

# *PART THREE*

# *THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE IMAM*

## *The Infallibility of the Imam*

One of the most important issues which has always been a subject of discussion and debate among Muslims is the infallibility of the Imam (‘a), the Prophet’s successor. The Imamate Shi’ahs believe that infallibility is one of the fundamental qualifications of the Imam, and they consider a fallible person to be incompetent for the position of the Imamate. The Sunnis, however, do not consider infallibility to be a qualification of the caliph, and they even consider an evil doer to be eligible for the caliphate.

Infallibility has been defined in a number of ways which have been criticized, and it is not necessary to mention these definitions here. Therefore, we will refer to the correct definition and then enter our discussion.

Infallibility denotes an extraordinary inner power and a strong spiritual strength which is achieved as a result of witnessing the reality of the world of existence, perceiving the celestial realm, and sensing the inner world. Whenever this extraordinary inner power exists in a person, he will become immune from error and sin and be protected in a number of ways:

1. He will not err in perceiving realities and truths.

2. He neither errs nor suffers from forgetfulness in the recording and preservation of Islamic laws and dictates.

3. He neither errs nor sins in the dissemination and communication of the Islamic laws.

4. In his deeds, he is immune from deliberate sin and unintentional mistakes and the possibility of his committing sin and transgressing is zero.

It is important to mention that even though infallible people do not commit sin and are completely immune from sinning, it does not mean that they do not have the power to commit sin and are thus compelled to obey the Lord of the world. Rather, the infallible person, like every other person, is endowed with complete freedom and volition in deeds. He is not under any kind of compulsion or coercion. He is able to commit sin just like other people, but because he has attained knowledge of the depths of the world of existence, he is averse to sin and error of his own volition and free will. He sees the reality of the world by means of his heart's inner eye and because of the extraordinary power which has been embedded within him. The agents of sin and error within him have been defeated and are ineffective.

## OBJECTION

It is possible for one to doubt the possibility of this principle of infallibility, and say, 'How can a person who, like other human beings, is endowed with animal instincts and carnal desires–which are the agents of sin–have complete immunity from sin and there be no possibility of his sinning?!'

## RESPONSE

Humans seek perfection and happiness. They have no goal save attaining felicity in all their endeavors. People do whatever they believe is right, and they imagine is useful for the attainment of happiness and perfection. Even in cases where a person does inappropriate acts, it is because he does not believe they are incorrect. Rather, he imagines his acts to be good and a means for attaining felicity. For example, a person who commits suicide does so because he considers life to be bitter and difficult, and he imagines that putting an end to this miserable life will result in ease and happiness. Had he considered suicide to be bad or detrimental, he would never attempt it. A person who steals does so because he does not consider it to be bad. Rather, he considers it to be beneficial and necessary and a means for him to attain ease and happiness. A person who gambles or commits murder does so because he imagines these to be ways for gaining success.

In general, whoever commits bad and unseemly deeds does so either because he has not perceived the badness in them and is unaware of the evil consequences, or because he has deficient belief in their badness. His understanding has not reached a level where his perception of the badness of the act is unambiguous. His belief in the badness of evil deeds has not reached a level where he can condemn these deeds and consider them to be useless. He is not yet one hundred percent convinced of the badness and detriments of evil deeds. His animal instincts and carnal desires have gained predominance. The ugliness of his deeds hides behind a curtain of heedlessness and he sees them manifested as beautiful and acceptable. That is

why he loses his control and commits ugly deeds. On the other hand, when a person witnesses the reality of evil deeds and is one hundred percent convinced of their iniquitous harm, he naturally acquires immunity from committing these deeds.

In previous discussions it was briefly mentioned and in future discussions it will be thoroughly proven that the Imam (‘a) comprehends the reality of religion and the inner facets of the Divine Laws. He witnesses the objective ugliness and the disadvantages of sins by means of his inner eye and spiritual powers. He has so much faith that it defeats the agents of sin and renders them ineffective. Therefore, even though the Imam (‘a) has complete and total immunity from sin, nonetheless it is not because the means to sin do not exist within him; rather, temptations are ineffective in the face of his perfect certainty and divine vision of reality. He does not approach sin based upon his own volition and free will.

## OBJECTION

The creation of human beings in particular and their physical structure is such that they have always been prone to sin, error, forgetfulness, and negligence. The Imams (‘a) and the Prophet (s) are human beings too, and so this principle also applies to them. How is it possible to assume that a man who is like other human beings in knowledge, senses, and feelings does not err in learning and has complete immunity from forgetfulness and inattention?

## RESPONSE

It is true that the Noble Prophet (s) and the Imams (‘a) are human beings too, but in the following discussions it will be proven that their knowledge is not the same as the knowledge of other people. Their knowledge is considerably different. Our knowledge consists of a series of concepts and notions which we have acquired through our senses and scientific documents. That is why it is always prone to error and mistake and we often forget. However, the Prophet (s) and the Imams (‘a) have connection with the unseen world, and by means of their inner eye they witness the spiritual world of being and the total reality of existence. Their knowledge is not acquired through the senses and so they do not err in perception. This knowledge springs from their inner being. They have gained access to the treasury of knowledge and science. A person who witnesses realities by means of their inner eye does not err in the conception and perception of realities. A person who has the treasury of knowledge and science at his disposal does not suffer from forgetfulness and heedlessness.

Furthermore, though human beings are liable to error and forgetfulness, they are not prerequisites for life. What hindrance is there before God, the Wise, to create His chosen Prophets (‘a) and Imams (‘a) such that they are immune from error in the conception and perception of realities and exempt from forgetfulness and heedlessness? When reason (*‘aql*) and narrations (*naql*) both denote that the Prophet (s) and the Imams (‘a) are infallible, the truth of the matter shouldn’t be doubted.

### *Hisham's Argument*

Muhammad bin Abi 'Amir reported, 'The best statement I have heard from Hisham bin Hakam was when I asked him whether the Imam was infallible or not, to which he responded in the affirmative. I asked him what infallibility was and how it could be proven. He said:

"All sins originate from four things: greed, envy, anger and lust. These four characteristics are the cause of all sins and there is no fifth. However, none of these four things exist in the being of the Imam ('a). The Imam ('a) is not greedy for the world because the world is at his disposal. Therefore, being greedy has no meaning for him. The Imam ('a) is not envious because a person feels jealous of one who is higher than himself. There is no position higher than that of Imamate.

The Imam ('a) doesn't get angry due to the affairs of the world. He only expresses anger for God. The execution of Divine Laws and Limits is in the hands of the Imam ('a). Thus, the Imam ('a) must be such that the rebuke of the people does not affect him and prevent him from enforcing the Divine limits. The Imam ('a) does not follow his wishes and desires and does not prefer the world over the hereafter, because he loves the Hereafter and the affairs related to it.

The Imam ('a) witnesses the Hereafter in the same way that we see the world. Have you seen a person who prefers an ugly face over a beautiful one, bitter food over tasty food or rough cloth over soft cloth? Is it befitting that one

should prefer the transient affairs of this world over the eternal blessings of the Hereafter?'[1]

### *Infallibility from the Viewpoint of Reason*

A number of arguments have been given to prove the necessity of the existence of the Imam ('a) each one of which can be taken into consideration to prove the infallibility of the Imam ('a). If you refer again to the rational discourse presented on the Imamate and read it carefully, you will be more prepared for this discussion. We will briefly refer to that discourse again here.

### *First Proof*

In the first argument it was proven that humankind, like the other beings in the world of nature, is on the path of motion and perfection. In his inner being, he is heading towards the ultimate goal of human perfection. And it was said that the straight path towards perfection denotes the inner facet or spirit of these Divine Laws and directives which have been revealed by God through the Prophets ('a). This way is the real and true path. Its levels are connected and cannot be segmented. The ultimate end of this motion towards perfection is the last attainable level of human perfection, the inner substance of the Divine Laws, the divine station of guardianship (*wilayat*), the Imamate. It was also stated that there must always be a perfect human being among humankind in whom all of the perfections which have been revealed by God have reached actualization. He is the outlet of divine favors and the perfect and complete manifestation of God's best

[1]. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 25, p. 192.

names. Through him a connection exists between the Divine world and humankind in order to protect the straight path of religion and the ultimate goal of human motion.

Based upon this explanation, the necessity for the Imam (‘a) to be infallible is clear. Because according to what has been said the Imam (‘a) is a perfect being, a model, and a distinguished man of religion. It is clear that a perfect being must be on the straight path of religion and possess knowledge of the inner substance of the Divine Laws and the realities revealed by God. Such a person definitely acts upon all the laws of religion. His holy being is not prone to disobedience and transgression of the Divine Laws, because the straight path is only one path, and a strong connection and relationship exists between the Divine Laws and the straight path towards human perfection. One who transgresses the Divine Laws, even one of them, is not on the straight path and has deviated from the path of truth. Such a person is not a perfect human being and cannot be the ultimate goal of humanity.

It can be inferred from this explanation that the Imam (‘a) is immune from sin and disobedience. Likewise, it can be deduced that error and forgetfulness of the Divine Laws does not affect his holy being. A person, who is the fulfillment of the religious laws and whose inner being and spirit witnesses the reality of the world of existence, and conceive true perfection with his inner eye, does not deviate from or become heedless of the religious path of perfection.

It is possible for a person who errs and forgets to deviate from the straight path. However, it has been said that the

Imam (‘a) is always walking along the path of religion. He is the fulfillment of the inner substance of the Divine Laws and immune from deviation and sin.

In order for this matter to become clearer, it is necessary for one to carefully read the *first proof* again. It should be carefully meditated upon so that the need for the infallibility of the Imam (‘a) may be understood.

### *Second Proof*

In the second proof it has been stated that merely sending the Noble Prophet (s) and disseminating the religious laws and directives through him does not guarantee and safeguard the Exalted God’s objective, which is perfecting humankind. The period of the Prophet’s (s) life among people was limited and short, whereas the laws of religion need a guarantor for enforcement. Therefore, God’s infinite mercy necessitates that He introduce individuals, whom He considers qualified for the management and leadership of the people and in whose integrity and virtue He has confidence, to the populace. He hands over to them the responsibility of protecting and enforcing the Divine Laws.

In this case, also the objective of God, the High, is guaranteed and safeguarded only if the person put in charge of enforcing the Divine Laws is immune from sin and transgression. These overseers have to be exempt from error and forgetfulness in receiving, preserving, and disseminating religious injunctions in order for the religious laws and injunctions to be executed completely and without any additions or subtractions. If they are fallible in any one of these areas or in all of them, it is

possible for them to deliberately commit sin, incorrectly learn a Divine law, forget a law, or err in its enforcement. If any of these occurs, the true laws will not be executed and the objective of God, the Glorified, will not be fulfilled. Therefore, those who are responsible for enforcing the laws which are revealed by God have to be immune from sin and error, and be one hundred percent trustworthy.

***Objection***

A person may say, 'According to this explanation, we must also believe that the officials, functionaries, commanders and judges of the Imams ('a) are infallible so that they will not be affected by error, sin, forgetfulness, and heedlessness in the execution of the orders of the Imam ('a). However, you yourselves do not believe this, and you do not say that infallibility is one of their necessary qualifications. Therefore, in the same way that you say it not being necessary for these people to be infallible, it may also be said that it is not necessary for the Imam ('a) to be infallible.

***Response***

Our proof denotes nothing more than that there has to be an infallible person appointed by God at the head of the government and the executive branch of the Islamic society. This person should know the Divine Laws correctly, believe that their enforcement is his duty, and be immune from error, sin, forgetfulness, and selfishness. In this way the Muslims will have someone who is infallible to take refuge with; and, the Divine Laws will not be left without a protector and executor. This is a necessary part

of God's mercy, and it is necessary for God to have appointed an infallible person for the guidance and perfection of human beings.

However, when this infallible individual exists among human beings it is no longer essential that all of his officials and functionaries be infallible. Although it is possible for the officials to sin and disobey the Imam ('a), they have the means for getting the true laws because the Imam ('a) is present among them. They can go to the Imam ('a) to learn the laws of their religion. Should one of the officials turn out to be selfish and misuse the Divine Laws, the Imam ('a), who is at the head of the Islamic government, guarding the Islamic society, can reprimand or dismiss him and replace him with a good and pious person.

Basically, if officials know at the head of their office is an infallible Imam ('a) who watches over their deeds and movements, is not negligent in the execution of Divine Laws, does not trespass God's directives, and that it is impossible to bribe or influence him by any other means, they will seldom violate the law. When pious people believe in the righteousness, chastity and devotion of their leader, they are strongly encouraged in the execution of religious laws and show devotion. Pious people refrain from transgressions due to fear of divine retribution and the reproach of the infallible Imam ('a).

In short, God's mercy does not necessitate more than providing a correct and orderly infrastructure so that the people of the society may move on the path towards true perfection. For the realization of this purpose, it is necessary that an infallible leader be introduced to them so

that he may manage the society in the best possible manner, once they yield and submit to him. However, it is not necessary that God take hold of every person's hand and place a number of infallible guards for each person to lead him to prosperity through coercion and compulsion.

***Third Proof***

It has been said that the laws which have been sent down for the guidance and perfection of humankind and for securing happiness in this world and the next need to be preserved among humanity for all eternity without any additions and subtractions. In addition, the straight path of religion and the whole set of Divine Laws have to be within the reach of humankind so that they may make use of them whenever they wish and so that they will not have any excuse or pretext in traversing the path of righteousness. In this case too, the purpose of God, the High, will be secured and the Divine Laws will be preserved without any additions and subtractions if their preserver and protector is an infallible person who is immune from error, forgetfulness and sin in learning and disseminating the laws. If the Imam (‘a), and the preserver of Divine Laws is liable to sin, error and forgetfulness like other human beings, Divine Laws will be subjected to change, transformation, distortion and eradication.

If the Imam (‘a), who is the leader of human beings, is not infallible, he is likely to err and suffer forgetfulness in the acquisition or preservation of Divine Laws, in guiding the people and communicating the laws to them, or in understanding the Book and Sunnah. Consequently, Divine Laws would not endure and be preserved. In addition, the Holy Qur'an by itself alone does not suffice

for the guidance of humankind, because in the Holy Qur'an all of the religious laws have not been explained in a way that is completely understandable to all human beings. Rather, many of the verses of that Divine Book need the interpretation and explanation of an infallible Imam (‘a).

***Fourth Proof***

The Imam (‘a) is the leader of human beings and their instructor. The people follow the Imam (‘a), compare their deeds and statements with his actions and sayings, and follow his example. It is not enough for the leader and instructor of human beings to articulate good sayings and instructional admonitions with beautiful, attractive and rhetorical words. It is necessary that he be trustworthy and reliable in the eyes of the nation and have a place in their hearts.

The leader and Imam (‘a) can be trusted by all the people when he acts upon what he says in such a way that his conduct attests to the sincerity of his faith and sayings. If the Imam (‘a) acts upon his sayings and is immune from sin and disobedience to God, the High, he can influence the depths of people's hearts, their inner souls, and rule their feelings and sentiments. If an Imam (‘a) speaks good and acceptable words but is not bound by them himself and acts contrary to what he says, the people will not trust him and his verbal preaching will not bear any fruit. The people will tell each other that if this person speaks the truth, he should have faith in his own words and act upon them himself first then call upon others to follow him. They will say that since he does not act upon what he says himself, it is clear that he is a trickster and deceiver who is

misusing his power. A hundred demonstrations and proofs cannot match the effects of one external act in proving the correctness of a thing. It may be said that an act is worth a thousand words.[1]

If the functionaries and agents of the Imam and leader were to see that the Imam (‘a) himself does not act upon the laws which he presents as Divine Laws, they would consider him to be a liar and deceiver and become remiss and negligent in executing those laws. If the masses were to see that the Imam (‘a) and his agents were not bound and obligated by the enacted laws, they too would shirk responsibility as much as they could and would consider sin and disobedience to be permissible.

If an oppressive person were to advise and admonish people hundreds of times and warn them about retribution in the Hereafter, they would not pay any heed to his statements. The advice and admonitions of a person who usurps other people’s property are fruitless.

Thus, it can be said that since the Imam (‘a) is the instructor and leader of the people, he must be immune from sin and disobedience to God’s laws in order for the people to trust him, for them to take his words and deeds as their model, and so that they will have no excuses or pretexts [for disobeying].

It is for this very reason that it can be said that the Imam (‘a) must be immune and protected from sin, error, and forgetfulness. If he is errant and forgetful, his words will be null and void, there will be the possibility of error and forgetfulness in any of his sayings, and the people will

[1] Actions speaklouder than words [Pr].

not trust what he says. In such a situation, the aim of God, the High, which is guiding and perfecting human beings, will remain incomplete.

### *The Limits of Infallibility*

A number of matters were deduced from these arguments regarding infallibility:

1. The Imam (‘a) has to be immune from sin and disobedience in resepect to God’s laws and have complete infallibility with regards to all sins. He has to act upon all the obligatory laws and injunctions of the *Shari‘ah*, and refrain from all forbidden and *haram* acts.

2. In the same way that he is immune from great sins, he must also be immune from lesser sins.

3. The Imam (‘a) must have immunity from error, forgetfulness and negligence in learning the Divine Laws, interpreting the laws of the *Shari‘ah,* recording and preserving the laws of the *Shari‘ah*, propagating and preaching the Divine Laws, and instructing the people.

It can be understood with certainty based upon the four proofs on infallibility that the Imam (‘a) and leader of human beings must be immune from all sins, negligence, and error during his Imamate and must be safeguarded by God, the High.

## INFALLIBILITY BEFORE THE PERIOD OF IMAMATE

One pertinent issue which is discussed and debated among the scholars is whether or not the Imam (‘a) has to be infallible from the beginning of his life, even before ascending to the office of Imamate, up to the end.

Some people have said that infallibility certainly means immunity from sin during the period of the office of the Imamate, but there is no need for the Imam (‘a) to be infallible before occupying the office of the Imamate. They have said that it is possible for the person who is coming into this position to be soiled with sin and wrongdoing during the early days of his life, but that he suddenly repents when he is appointed to the office of the Imamate. He is then immediately granted infallibility by God, the High. In actuality he is telling the people, ‘Even though I have been a sinner like you before this, now that I have become your leader and Imam (‘a) from now on I will not commit sin anymore and I will be immune from future sins.’

There is another group who are opposed to the group of people who say the above. They say that the Imams (‘a) and Prophets (s) must be immune from sin from the beginning to the end of their lives. We need to examine the proofs of infallibility one by one to reveal the credibility of this argument.

In the first proof it was shown that there must always be a perfect human being among humankind in whom all the possible human perfections have been actualized and fulfilled and who is a perfect example of religion. Such an

individual has manifested the inner facets of the Divine Laws and travels the straight path of religion. He sees the realities of the world with his inner eye and is a blessed being. Such an individual is the Imam (‘a) and leader of the caravan of humankind and the ultimate goal of their motion towards perfection. It was said that this proof sufficiently shows that this perfect individual of humankind, who is called Imam (‘a), has to be immune from sin and forgetfulness. He can only be considered a perfect human being and a role model of religion when he acts upon all the laws and injunctions of religion, is on the path of religion, and is completely immune from sin and wrongdoing; otherwise, he is not on the straight path.

This proof shows that the Imam (‘a) must be infallible during the time of his Imamate. With a little reflection it may also be understood that he has to be immune from sins before the period of his Imamate. A person can only be considered to be the most perfect individual of humankind and the perfect role model when he acts upon all the Divine Laws and religious commandments from the beginning to the end of his life, and he has not become soiled by sin or wrongdoing at all. Such a person can be said to be traveling the straight path of religion. Moreover, he himself is the manifestation of the straight path of religion. But, a person who has passed a part of his life in sin and disobedience, even if only at the beginning of his life, cannot be a perfect role model of faith and a realization of the inner facets of the Divine Laws. Therefore, it can be inferred from this proof that the Imam (‘a) has to be infallible, even before assuming the position of Imamate.

The second and third proofs do not apply to this topic, because the Imam (‘a) is not the executor and preserver of the Divine Laws before occupying the position of the Imamate.

In the fourth proof it was stated that since the Imam (‘a) is the leader of human beings and the instructor of the souls, he has to be one hundred percent trustworthy. A person who is himself soiled by sin and wrongdoing cannot influence the people’s hearts nor rule the souls and minds of the masses. An iniquitous person cannot train pious and righteous human beings. Therefore, the Imam (‘a) has to be infallible during the time he holds the office of the Imamate. Perhaps it can be deduced from this same evidence that he must be infallible before having been appointed to the position of the Imamate, because a leader and instructor has to be pious and righteous to train people (because sin and wrongdoing render his leadership and instruction fruitless and ineffective). Likewise he must not have a bad background. If an instructor has an unfavorable background, the souls and minds of the people who should submit to his teachings will be influenced to a lesser degree. The people will not submit completely to a person who has passed a part of his life in sin and disobedience towards the Lord of the worlds and has a bad reputation among the people. Then, at the time he is appointed to the office of the Imamate and leadership, he says, ‘I repent now and am sorry for my past sins. I will not commit any sin from now on. I have now become completely immune from sin and wrongdoing.’

Such a person cannot appeal to the people’s hearts. People will tell each other that up until yesterday this person was a wrongdoer. Perhaps he is still a liar and deceiver after

becoming our Imam and leader. If he refrains from sin and wrongdoing now, it is not due to a strong faith because he is still that same person. Perhaps he has taken recourse to pretentiousness and deception since he sees the possibility for reaping benefits in leadership; and, now he is only showing himself off in the garb of asceticism and piety.

In any case, if the Imam or the one who is to train human beings has a bad reputation, he cannot influence the people's souls and minds in an appropriate manner. He cannot be trusted by everyone. It is for this very reason that perhaps it can be said that the Imam must be infallible and pious even before occupying the office of the Imamate.

It is worthy of mention that the fourth proof is nothing more than a theological proof, and the first proof is more reliable.

## THE QUR'AN AND INFALLIBILITY

﴿وَإِذِ ابْتَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

*"And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust'."*[1]

[1]. *Qur'an* 2:124.

This verse was already discussed previously and some conclusions were reached about it, hence there is no need to repeat those discussions here. What pertains to the present discourse on the Imamate is from the end of the verse.

When Abraham (‘a) asked whether anyone from among his descendants would be granted the position of the Imamate, God responded that the Imamate would not extend to the unjust. The general rule may be inferred from this verse that the unjust will never be appointed to the position of the Imamate, which is a divine position.

In addition, we must understand the Arabic meaning of the term *zalim* (unjust) and to which people it applies to in this verse. Linguists and many scholars say that injustice means placing a thing in other than its rightful place. On the other hand, justice means placing a thing in its rightful place.

The world of being has a particular order. Every being is a particular part of existence and has been placed within a particular limitation. Divine Laws and instructions have been compiled according to humankind’s primordial nature and the laws of creation. If a person acts according to the laws of nature and correlates his actions with truth and reality, he will be considered a just person. However, if he violates the truth and laws of primordial nature and commits sin, he will be considered to be unjust.

According to the descriptions from the Holy Qur’an, there are three kinds of injustice.

First, one kind of injustice is against God. In the Holy Qur’an, God states:

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾

*"When Luqman said to his son, as he advised him: 'O my son! Do not ascribe any partners to Allah. Polytheism is indeed a great injustice'."*[1]

And in another place it is written:

﴿ فَمَنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

*"So whoever fabricates a lie against Allah after that—it is they who are the wrongdoers."*[2]

The world of creation has only one God, all worship and homage should be directed towards him. A person who takes another object for worship has transgressed the limits and is said to be unjust.

Second, another kind of injustice is one person against another. In the Holy Qur'an, God says:

﴿ إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ﴾

*"The blame lies only upon those who wrong the people and commit aggression in the land unduly. For such there is a painful punishment."*[3]

The law of creation necessitates that a person should benefit from the products of his own labor, and that no one should bother him. Therefore, a person who violates the

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1. *Qur'an* 31 13.
2. *Qur'an* 3:94.
3. *Qur'an* 42:42.

truth and other people's rights is transgressing against the laws of nature and is considered to be unjust (*zalim*).

Third, another injustice is against one's own soul. God, the High, in the Holy Qur'an states:

﴿ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ﴾

*"Then We made heirs to the Book those whom We chose from Our servants. Yet some of them are those who wrong themselves, and some of them are average, and some of them are those who take the lead in all the good works by Allah's will. That is the greatest grace [of Allah]!"*[1]

And again:

﴿ وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى إِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ﴾

*"And We blessed him and Isaac. Among their descendants [some] are virtuous, and [some] who manifestly wrong themselves."*[2]

God has created human beings for happiness and perfection and has placed at their disposal the way for attaining the final goal, which is the substance of the Divine Laws and programs. Therefore, whoever transgresses the straight path of religion and divine limitations has committed injustice against his own soul and will be considered an unjust person.

God in the Holy Qur'an states:

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1. *Qur'an* 35:32.
2. *Qur'an* 37:113.

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَطَلِّقُوهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ لَا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِنْ بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِينَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيِّنَةٍ وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ لَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا﴾

*"O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them at [the conclusion of] their term and calculate the term, and be wary of Allah, your Lord. Do not turn them out from their houses, nor shall they go out, unless they commit a gross indecency. These are Allah's bounds, and whoever transgresses the bounds of Allah certainly wrongs himself. You never know maybe Allah will bring off something new later on."*[1]

And again it is written:

﴿الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَانِ فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا مِمَّا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

*"[Revocable] divorce may be only twice; then [let there be] either an honourable retention, or a kindly release. And it is not lawful for you to take back anything from what you have given them, unless the couple fear that they may not maintain Allah's bounds; so if you fear they would not maintain Allah's bounds, there is no sin upon them in what she may give to secure her release. These are Allah's bounds, so do not transgress them, and whoever*

[1]. *Qur'an* 65:1.

*transgresses the bounds of Allah—it is they who are the wrongdoers."*[1]

Injustice has these three meanings in the Holy Qur'an. However, with deeper reflection it can be seen that the first and second kinds of injustice are also against the soul, because in all of these instances people have oppressed their own souls.

In any case, people are of four kinds:

(1) Those who commit sin and wrongdoing from the beginning to the end of their lives.

(2) Those who commit sin and wrongdoing at the beginning of their life but not at the end of their life.

(3) Those who do not commit sin or wrongdoing until the end of their lives.

(4) Those who never commit sin or wrongdoing.

The first, second, and third types of people are unjust according to the meaning of the verses of the Holy Qur'an and the example of unjust people about whom God in response to Abraham ('a) said, *'My pledge* (of Imamate and leadership) *does not extend to the unjust.'*

It can be sufficiently understood from this verse that the Imam and leader of a nation has to be a person who has not committed sin from the beginning to the end of his life, and he must be immune from all kinds of error and disobedience.

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[1]. *Qur'an* 2:229.

## THE VERSE OF PURIFICATION

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾

*"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification."*[1]

There have been many discussions and debates regarding this verse. The Shi'ah scholars and some of the Sunni scholars believe that this verse denotes the infallibility of the People of the Prophet's Household ('a), but many of the Sunnis do not agree. It is therefore necessary for us to reflect and delve deeper so that the truth may become known. For this study, it is necessary for a number of issues to be examined albeit briefly.

### *The Circumstances of the Revelation of the Verse of Purification*

There is no doubt that the Verse of Purification was revealed with respect to the Noble Prophet (s), 'Ali ('a), Fatimah ('a), Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a), because there are numerous traditions which have been recounted by both the Shi'ah and Sunnis which denote that this verse was revealed with respect to them (the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)). These traditions may be found in various sources from the two sects. As an example, we will refer to some of these traditions.

'Aishah said:

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[1]. *Qur'an* 33:33.

One morning God's Prophet (s) left the house with a black cloak on his shoulders. 'Ali ('a), Fatimah ('a), Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a) joined him and he covered them with the cloak, and said:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾

*"Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification."*[1]

Ummah Salamah has related, 'The Verse of Purification was revealed in my house. One day Fatimah ('a) brought a dish full of a meat soup for the Noble Prophet (s). The Noble Prophet (s) said, "Invite your husband 'Ali ('a) and your children Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a) as well." When they came and were eating, the Verse of Purification was revealed. Then the Noble Prophet (s) spread the cloak which was on his shoulder over them and repeated three times, "O God! These are the People of my Household, my special ones. Remove uncleanness and contamination from them, and make them clean and pure."'[2]

'Umar bin Abi Salamah related that the verse '*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*' was revealed in Umm Salamah's house. He reported, 'The Noble Prophet (s) called 'Ali ('a), Fatimah ('a), Hasan ('a), and Husayn ('a), spread the cloak that was on his shoulders over them, and said: "O Lord!

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1. *Yanabi' al-Mawadah*, vol. 1, p. 319; *Al-Dur al-Manthur*, vol. 5, p. 198 and *Jama' al-Usul*, vol. 9, p. 154.
2. *Yanabi' al-Mawadah,* vol. 1, p. 319; *Al-Dur al-Manthur*, vol. 5, p. 198.

These are the members of my household. Remove impurities from them and purify them." Umm Salamah asked, "O Prophet of God! Am I one of them?" The Noble Prophet (s) responded, "Remain in your place. You too are virtuous."'[1]

Zaynab reported, 'When the Prophet of God (s) saw that God's mercy was descending from the heavens, he (s) asked, "Who will call 'Ali ('a), Fatimah ('a), Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a)?" I said, "Me." When they came to the Noble Prophet (s), he spread his cloak over them and went under it too. Then the Angel Gabriel brought the Verse of Purification.'[2]

Shadad bin 'Ammar narrated, 'One day I was in the company of Wathilah bin Asqa' when I heard a number of people speaking ill of 'Ali ('a). After they left, Wathila asked me, "Do you want me to tell you a story I personally witnessed?" I said, "Yes." He said, "One day I went to Fatimah's house and asked for 'Ali ('a). She told me that he had gone to the Prophet's (s) house along with Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a). I stayed there waiting for Hadrat 'Ali ('a) until the Noble Prophet (s) entered Fatimah's house holding the hands of Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a) and accompanied by 'Ali ('a). He had 'Ali ('a) and Fatimah ('a) sit close to him and put Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a) on his knees. He spread his cloak over them and recited the verse*, "Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the*

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1. *Yanabi' al-Mawadah,* vol. 1, p. 319; *Jama' al-Usul*, vol. 10, p. 101.
2. *Yanabi' al-Mawadah*, vol. 1, p. 323; *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, vol. 9, p. 167.

*Household, and purify you with a thorough purification".* Then he said, "O God! These are the members of my Household and the members of my Household are more worthy."'[1]

Abu Sa'id Khudri said the Verse of Purification was revealed with regards to five people: God's Prophet (s), 'Ali ('a), Fatimah ('a), Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a).[2]

Imam Hasan ('a) in a sermon said, 'We are the members of the Prophet's Household about whom God said "*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.*"'[3]

Shadad bin 'Abdullah narrated, 'One day I was in the presence of Wathilah bin Asqa' when they brought Imam Husayn's head. One of the Syrian's expressed joy at this, whereupon Wathilah bin Asqa' got angry and said, "I swear by God that ever since I witnessed the occasion of the revelation of the Verse of Purification in the house of Umm Salamah, I have always loved 'Ali ('a), Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a). One day I was blessed to visit the Noble Prophet (s) in Umm Salamah's house. Hasan ('a) entered, the Noble Prophet (s) had him sit on his right knee, and he kissed his forehead. Then Husayn ('a) came in, the Noble Prophet (s) had him sit on his left knee, and he kissed his forehead. Next Fatimah ('a) came in and he had her sit in front of himself, and finally 'Ali ('a) came in. The Prophet (s) placed a cloak over them all – it's as if I can

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[1]. *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, vol. 9, p. 167.
[2]. *Yanabi' al-Mawadah*, vol. 1, p. 322.
[3]. *Ibid; Majma' al-Zawa'id,* vol. 9, p. 172.

still see that scene – and recited the verse, '*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.*"'

Shadad said he asked Wathilah what impurity meant, and Wathilah responded, 'Doubt about God.'[1]

'Amir bin Wathilah narrated, 'I was present in the meeting on the day of the *shura*. I heard 'Ali ('a) say, "Abu Bakr appointed 'Umar to succeed him as caliph despite the fact that I was more worthy of it than 'Umar. Later, 'Umar placed the caliphate between six people for them to choose the next caliph from among themselves. He put me at the same level with these other five people, without distinguishing any superiority for me although I can prove this to them." He also said, "By God, is there one among you for whom the verse '*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*' was revealed? The Noble Prophet (s) placed his own cloak over Fatimah ('a), Hasan ('a), Husayn ('a) and me and said, 'O Lord! These are the members of my Household. Remove impurities from them and purify them.'" All the people present at the *shura* responded in the negative [to this question].'[2]

'Awam bin Hushab's cousin reported, 'My father and I went to see 'Aishah together. I asked her about 'Ali ('a). She said, 'You are asking about the person who was the most beloved to the Noble Prophet (s) and was his son-in-law. I saw the Noble Prophet (s) call 'Ali ('a),

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1. *Ghayat al-Maram*, vol. 3, p. 179.
2. *Ibid*, p. 294.

Fatimah (‘a), Hasan (‘a) and Husayn (‘a) to himself and place his cloak over them. Then he said, “O God! These are the members of my household. Remove impurities from them and purify them.” Then I went close and asked, “O Prophet of God! Am I one of the members of your household?” He answered, “Go aside. You are also a good person.”[1]

Umm Salamah narrated, ‘God’s Prophet (s) told Fatimah (‘a), “Call your husband and your two children.” When they came, he spread a cloak over them, placed his blessed hand over them, and said, “O God! These are the members of Muhammad’s household. Grant them your peace and blessings.” Then I took [the edge of] the cloak to go under it, whereupon the Noble Prophet (s) pulled the cloak from me and said, “You are also a good person.”’[2]

According to the foregoing traditions, the occasion of the revelation of the Verse of Purification was as follows. The Prophet of God (s) gathered ‘Ali (‘a), Fatimah (‘a), Hasan (‘a) and Husayn (‘a) around himself and they sat together. Then he spread a black cloak over them and recited the Verse of Purification, which had been sent down from God, and he prayed for his Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).

The Tradition of the Cloak (*Hadith Kisa*) has been narrated in many forms in both the Sunni and Shi‘ah books.

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1. *Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba‘ah*, vol. 1, p. 88.
2. *Dhakha’ir al-‘Uqba*, p. 21.

## WITNESSES OF THE EVENT

A number of the relatives, servants and special companions of the Noble Prophet (s) witnessed and narrated the event of *Hadith Kisa* (i.e., the event of the cloak). Some of these include the following:

1. Umm Salamah, one of the trustworthy and respectable wives of God's Prophet (s), explained the aforesaid event in a number of instances for various people. It is narrated that this event took place in her house.

2. 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), who himself was one of the people of the cloak, narrated this event for many people and quoted it on many occasions.

3. Imam Hasan ('a).

4. 'Aishah, the wife of the Noble Prophet (s), who stated that she witnessed the event herself.

5. 'Umar the son of Umm Salamah.

6. Zaynab the daughter of Umm Salamah who was brought up by the Noble Prophet (s) said, 'I was told by the Noble Prophet (s) to call 'Ali ('a), Fatimah ('a), Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a).' Zaynab and 'Umar (#5) were Umm Salamah's children and were living with her in her house. Therefore, it is probable that they were witnesses of the event.

7. Thuban, the Prophet's (s) freed slave, about whom it has been written that he attended on the Noble Prophet (s) whether he was on a journey or at home.

8. Wathilah bin Asqa', who was one of the Noble Prophet's (s) servants, said that he witnessed the event on

two occasions, once in the house of Umm Salamah and the other in the house of Fatimah (‘a).

9. The Noble Prophet (s), the key participant in the event, explained the circumstances of the revelation of the Verse of Purification for some of his companions.

Regarding another group of transmitters of the tradition, including Abu al-Hamra’, Anas bin Malik, Abu Sa‘id Khudri and Ibn ‘Abbas, it is not clear whether they witnessed the event directly or only heard it from the Noble Prophet (s) afterwards. In addition, there were other people who witnessed the Prophet (s) recite the Verse of Purification when passing by Fatimah’s (‘a) house for some time after the event. Some of the narrators of this event, like the Noble Prophet (s), ‘Ali (‘a), Fatimah (‘a), Hasan (‘a) and Husayn (‘a), were infallible, and a narration from any one of them is enough to prove the matter.

It can be inferred from the foregoing that this event took place at various times and places. Some people witnessed it in Umm Salamah’s house and others in Fatimah’s (‘a) house, as Wathilah bin Asqa‘ narrated.

According to the various versions of the tradition, it can be said that the actual event took place in Umm Salamah’s house and the Verse of Purification was revealed there. However, the Noble Prophet (s) repeated an account of this event in a number of places later on. He wanted to make the issue clear and designate who the members of his Household were so that afterwards no one would say that the Prophet’s (s) wives were also members of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) or that the aforesaid story was a commonplace matter.

### *Importance of the Matter*

The event of *kisa* took place inside a house, and so those who witnessed the event were limited in number. However, in order to make people understand the importance of the matter, and in order to disseminate it among his companions, the Noble Prophet (s) initiated an interesting strategy. For some time, whenever the Noble Prophet (s) passed by Fatimah's (‘a) house on his way to the mosque for morning prayers, he would address the occupants of her house as ‘the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a)’ and say, ‘Wake up for prayers, “*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*.”’

Anas bin Malik related, ‘For a period of six months, whenever he passed by Fatimah's house, the Noble Prophet (s) used to say, “O members of the household! Wake up for prayers, ‘*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*.”’”[1]

Abu al-Hamra' narrated, ‘For six months I saw that the Noble Prophet (s) would go to Fatimah's house and say, “*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*.”’[2]

Abu Barzah said, ‘I prayed with the Noble Prophet (s) for a period of eighteen months. Whenever he left his house and went to Fatimah's house, he would say, “Peace be upon you! ‘*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from*

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1. *Jama‘ al-Usul*, vol. 1, p. 101.
2. *Majma‘ al-Zawa'id*, vol. 9, p. 168.

*you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*.""[1]

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) related that the Noble Prophet (s) would come to their house every day and say, ‘May God have mercy on you! Wake up for prayers, "*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.*"'[2]

Ibn ‘Abbas stated, "For nine months I observed that when the Noble Prophet (s) went to the mosque for each prayer, he would go to ‘Ali's (‘a) house and say, ‘Peace be upon you O Ahl al-Bayt (‘a), '*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification'.*"[3]

Abu Sa‘id Khudri narrated that for forty successive mornings the Noble Prophet (s) went to Fatimah's (‘a) house and said, ‘Peace be upon you O Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)! "*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.*"'[4]

The Noble Prophet (s) continued this way for quite some time for a number of reasons. Firstly, he wanted to emphasize that this was not an insignificant event and impress upon his companions the importance of the matter so that later on no one would say the event of *kisa* was a simple story of family love. Secondly, he wanted to clearly designate the members of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) so

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1. *Ibid*.
2. *Ghayat al-Maram*, vol. 3, p. 200.
3. *Al-Imam al-Sadiq wa al-Madhahib al-Arba‘ah*, vol. 1, p. 89.
4. *Manaqib Kharazmi*, p. 60.

that later on no one would say that the Prophet's (s) wives were also members of this group. Thirdly, he wanted a number of his companions to become aware of the event and narrate it for other people.

## THE HOUSE OF THE PROPHET

Each of the wives of God's Prophet (s) lived in a particular room which was assigned to her. It was said: the house of 'Aisha, the house of Umm Salamah, the house of Zaynab, the house of Safia, etc.

In the Verse of Purification, the term '*Ahl al-Bayt* (the Household of the Prophet (s)) has been used.' In grammatical terminology the '*al*' of *al-Bayt* is [called] the '*al*' of specification[1]; [hence] *al-Bayt* means a specific house. Therefore, the term '*Ahl al-Bayt'* does not include the people of all the houses of the Prophet (s). Rather, it is an allusion to a specific house and the people of that particular house.

From many traditions about the occasion (or reason) of revelation of the verse, it is inferred that the specific house was the house of Umm Salamah, in which the Verse of Purification was revealed. It was in that house that the Noble Prophet (s), Imam 'Ali ('a), Fatimah al-Zahra ('a), Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husayn ('a) sat on one cloak, the Prophet of God covered them with it, and he recited the verse. While the verse was being revealed, there was

[1]. That is to say, it is a definite article.

no one in that house but these five individuals and Umm Salamah.

God's Prophet (s) did not give even Umm Salamah, who was the owner of the house, permission to stay inside and near the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a).[1]

It is deduced from this and other traditions that Umm Salamah was in the next room or in the closet of this same room. The Noble Prophet (s) did not content himself with this measure; rather, he covered himself and the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) under one woollen cloak and recited the verse. In this way, he limited the meaning of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) and prevented any misuse, so that later the wives of the Prophet (s) would not claim that they also were people of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) (Household of the Prophet (s)). The Noble Prophet (s) was so attentive to this matter that when Umm Salamah asked for permission to come under the cloak in order to become one of the people for whom this verse was revealed, he (s) pulled the cloak from her hands and said, "Stay there; you also are good."[2]

Therefore, it is possible to know the particular house and its people through the Prophet's (s) traditions.

Abu Sa'id Khadri has quoted the Noble Prophet (s) as saying, "The verse '*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*' was revealed in regard to me, 'Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn."[3]

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1. *Majma al-Zawa'id*, vol. 9, p. 166.
2. *Dhakhaír al-Uqba*, p. 21.
3. *Majma' al-Zawa'id,* vol. 9, p. 167.

Jabir says, "The verse '*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*' was revealed to the Prophet (s) when there was no one in that house except 'Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn."[1]

In addition to this, Imam 'Ali ('a) and Imam Hasan ('a) used to cite this verse to prove their superiority in various instances and in the presence of other people; and they used to introduce themselves as the people of the House of the Prophet. Not only no one ever opposed this, but it was affirmed by the Prophet's companions.

Sharik bin 'Abdullah says, "I saw Imam 'Ali ('a) giving a sermon among the Prophet's companions." [Then] he said, "By God! Do you know anyone, apart from me and the people of my house, about whom the verse '*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*' was revealed?" They said, "No."[2]

Imam 'Ali ('a) asked Abu Bakr, "In the name of God! Was the Verse of Purification revealed in regard to me and my wife and children, or in regard to you and the people of your house?" Abu Bakr answered, "It was in regard to you." Imam 'Ali ('a) asked again, "Was it about me and my family, or you and your family, that the Prophet (s) said, 'God, these are the People of my House. Their path is towards You, and not towards Your fire.'" Abu Bakr

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1. *Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn*, vol. 4, p. 277.
2. *Ghayat al-Muram*, vol. 3, p. 192.

answered, "It was about you and the people of your house."[1]

On the day of the *shura*[2] Imam 'Ali ('a) said, "By God! Is there anyone among you about whom the verse '*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*' was revealed, and whom the Prophet (s) covered with a cloak. And about whom he said 'These are the people of my house; O God! Keep impurity away from them?'" They answered, "No."[3]

Imam Hasan ('a), after his father, said in a sermon, "I am one of the *Ahl al-Bayt,* whom God has purified."[4]

After the event that took place in Umm Salamah's house the term *Ahl al-Bayt* became a noble and honourable title, and they were proud of it. They used to cite it in discussions, and this title has been mentioned many times in the words of the Prophet (s), Imam 'Ali ('a), Imam Hasan ('a) and Imam Husayn ('a).

## LEADERS OF RELIGION

Therefore, there should be no doubt in this regard that the primary instance [the term] '*Ahl al-Bayt*', in the Verse of Purification was revealed about, is those same five

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1. *Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn,* vol. 4, p. 271.
2. That is to say, the Consultative Council of six that was convened after 'Umar's death to select a caliph.
3. *Ibid,* p. 372.
4. *Majma al-Zawa'id,* vol. 9, p. 164.

individuals. God's Prophet (s) later expanded on the subject and introduced the *Ahl al-Bayt ('a)* as a stable and permanent group of people who would remain among the Muslims forever and shoulder the responsibility of the scientific leadership of Islam.

For example, Abu Sa'id Khadri has quoted God's Prophet (s) as saying, "I bequeath two great things to you. One is the Book of God, which is a rope pulled from the sky to the earth, and the other is my progeny and the people of my house. These two things will never separate from each other until the Resurrection Day."[1]

God's Prophet (s) also said, "The people of my house are like the ark of Noah; whoever embarked was saved, and whoever did not embark fell into the fire."[2]

In another place, the Prophet (s) said, "The stars bring safety for the inhabitants of the sky, and the people of my house bring safety for the inhabitants of the earth."[3]

It is concluded from these and other such traditions that it is not true that the people of the house of the Prophet (s) have a brief and declining existence, or that they come to an end with the death of these five people. Rather, it is a permanent and valid station which remains shoulder to shoulder with the Holy Qur'an until the Resurrection Day; and, these people bear the responsibility of leading the Muslim community. The following traditions may also be studied now:

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1. *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah,* vol. 2, p. 113.
2. *Ibid,* vol. 2, p. 269.
3. *Majma` al-Zawa'id,* vol. 9, p. 174.

Jabir bin `Abdullah has quoted God's Prophet (s) as saying, "God has put the descendants of every prophet in his own loins; but he has put my descendants in 'Ali's loins."[1]

Ibn 'Abbas said, "'Abbas and I were seated with God's Prophet (s) when 'Ali ('a) came in, greeted us, and the Prophet (s) answered him. Then the Prophet (s) embraced him, kissed his forehead, and had him sit next to himself. 'Abbas asked, 'O Prophet of God! Do you love 'Ali ('a)?' The Prophet (s) answered, 'O beloved uncle! God loves him more than I do. God has put the progeny of every prophet in his own loins, but he has put my progeny in 'Ali's loins.'"[2]

Imam 'Ali ('a) was asked, "What is the meaning of the Prophet's saying 'I leave among you two precious things, the Book of God and my progeny?' And who are the Prophet's progeny?" He answered, "Me, Hasan, Husayn and nine descendants from the children of Husayn, of whom the ninth will be the *Mahdi*[3]*, the Qa'im"*[4]. We are the progeny of God's Prophet (s), and the Prophet's offspring will never get separated from the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an too will never get separated from the Prophet's descendants, until the Resurrection Day when they meet God's Prophet (s) at the Fountain of Abundance *(al-Kawthar)* (in paradise)."[5]

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1. *Majma` al-Zawa'id*, vol. 9, p. 172.
2. *Dhakha'ir al-'Uqba*, p. 67; *Tarikh Baghdad*, vol. 1, p. 316.
3. Mahdi is the one who is guided and guides. [Trans.]
4. That is to say, the one who will establish justice. [Trans.]
5. *Ghayat al-Muram*, p. 218; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 147.

Imam ‘Ali (‘a) has quoted God’s Prophet (s) as saying, “I am leaving among you two precious things, the Book of God and my progeny who are the people of my house. These two things will never get separated from each other, like these two fingers, until the Resurrection Day. Jabir asked, “O Prophet of God! Who are your progeny?” The Prophet (s) answered, “‘Ali (‘a), Hasan, Husayn and the Imams who will come (into existence) from the lineage of Husayn (‘a) until the Resurrection Day.”[1]

‘Abd al-Rahman bin Kathir said he asked Imam Sadiq (‘a) what the meaning of the verse ‘*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*’ was. The Imam answered, “This verse was revealed in regard to ‘Ali, Hasan, Husayn, and Fatimah. After [the passing of] the Prophet (s), ‘Ali (‘a) came to the Imamate, [and then] after him Hasan (‘a), and after Hasan (‘a) Husayn (‘a). Then came the time for this verse:

﴿وَأُولُو الْأَرْحَامِ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلَى بِبَعْضٍ فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ﴾

*“…but the blood relatives are more entitled to inherit from one another in the Book of Allah.”*[2]

After Husayn his son ‘Ali came to the Imamate, and the Imamate will remain among his descendants. Obedience to them is obedience to God, and disobedience to them is disobedience to God.”[3]

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1. *Ghayat al-Muram*, p. 222; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 147.
2. *Qur’an* 8:75.
3. *Ghayat al-Muram*, vol. 3, p. 195.

Imam 'Ali ('a) said, "I was with God's Prophet (s) when the verse '*Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification*' was revealed. He told me, 'This verse has been revealed in regard to you and your sons Hasan and Husayn and the Imams who will come from your lineage. I asked him, 'O Prophet of God! How many Imams will there be after you?' He answered, 'The Imams will be you, Hasan bin 'Ali, Husayn bin 'Ali, 'Ali bin Husayn, Muhammad bin 'Ali, Ja'far bin Muhammad, Musa bin Ja'far, 'Ali bin Musa, Muhammad bin 'Ali, 'Ali bin Muhammad, Hasan bin 'Ali, and Muhammad bin Hasan. Their names have been written in this same order on the Throne of God. I asked God, "Who are these people?" He said, "They are the Imams after you; they are pure and infallible; and their enemies are accursed".'"[1]

## INTERPRETATION OF THE VERSE OF PURIFICATION

In Arabic everything dirty, unclean, and polluted is called *rijs*, whether it has exoteric (outer) impurity, which is called '*najis*', or esoteric (inner) impurity, which is called 'sin'. In the book '*Aqrab al-Mawarid*'[2] it has been written, "*Rijs* means dirty and polluted. It has also been used to mean sin which brings punishment."

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1. *Ibid*, p. 195.
2. Written by Sa'id al-Khuri Shartuni.

It has been written in the book '*al-Munjid*,' "*Rijs* denotes dirty and impure, and it has also been used to mean reprehensible and evil acts." Ibn Athir has written in the book '*Nihayah,*' "*Rijs* means impure and dirty, and is also used to mean ugly and illicit acts." It has been written in the book '*Lisan al-'Arab*,' "*Rijs* denotes impure, and it has also been used to mean illicit and reprehensible acts." Raghib Isfahani has written in the book '*Mufradat,' "Rijs* means dirty and filthy. This dirtiness is sometimes natural, sometimes intellectual, sometimes legal, and sometimes all three; like a corpse."

In the Qur'an *rijs* has been used in both ways. Sometimes it has been used to mean outer impurity; like:

﴿ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ ﴾

*"...except carrion or spilt blood, or the flesh of swine—for that is indeed unclean."*[1]

And, sometimes is has been used to mean inner impurity, as in the following verses:

﴿ فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾

*"...and whomever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow and straitened as if he were climbing to a height. Thus does Allah lay [spiritual] defilement on those who do not have faith."*[2]

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1. *Qur'an* 6:145.
2. *Qur'an* 6:125.

﴿ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَتْهُمْ رِجْسًا إِلَى رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴾

*"But as for those in whose heart is a sickness, it only adds defilement to their defilement, and they die while they are faithless."*[1]

﴿ قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ رِجْسٌ وَغَضَبٌ ﴾

*"He said, 'There has become due against you a punishment and wrath from your Lord…'."*[2]

*Rijs* in these verses has been used in a special spiritual sense. Every soul that is restricted and dark and in which the light of faith has not shined is dirty and impure.

In the Holy Qur'an the word *rijs* has been used in both senses. However, the word *rijs* which has been used in the Verse of Purification cannot be interpreted to mean an external impurity, because the necessity of eschewing outer impurities is not limited to the Household of the Prophet (s). Keeping away from impurities is incumbent on all mature adults. Although the verse, by using the word '*innama*' (indeed) which signifies limitation, has limited this subject to the Household of the Prophet (s).

Furthermore, the necessity of shunning impurities is neither a merit nor a virtue for the Household of the Prophet (s). It was not necessary to go through all those formalities, where the Prophet (s) had to cover them with his cloak and say 'O God! These are the people of my house, keep impurity away from them', and stop his wife

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1. *Qur'an* 9:125.
2. *Qur'an* 7:71.

Umm Salamah from entering under the cloak, lest she be included in [the meaning of] the verse. The necessity of keeping away from external impurities was not that important as to make Imam ‘Ali (‘a), Imam Hasan (‘a), Imam Husayn (‘a) and the rest of the Household of the Prophet (s) take pride in it and use it as an argument [in their favour]. Therefore, impurity in the Verse of Purification must be interpreted to mean spiritual and inner impurity.

## WILL

Will is of two kinds when attributed to God. The first kind is creational will. What is meant by creational will is that the intended thing has been realised in the system of creation and exists in reality; as in the verse:

﴿وَإِذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ سُوءًا فَلَا مَرَدَّ ﴾

*“And when Allah wishes to visit ill on a people, there is nothing that can avert it…”*[1]

﴿ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ﴾

*“All His command, when He wills something, is to say to it ‘Be,’ and it is.”*[2]

In creational will, God’s will is never opposed. If God wills a thing, it is certain and necessary to come about.

The second kind of will is legislative will. What is meant by legislative will is that God, the Almighty, has willed

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1. *Qur’an* 13:11.
2. *Qur’an* 36:82.

something from the point of view of legislation and the enactment of law. That is to say, He has made laws and judgements based on the things that He wants people to do. Some examples include:

﴿ فَمَنْ شَهِدَ مِنْكُمُ الشَّهْرَ فَلْيَصُمْهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ مَرِيضًا أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ فَعِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَيَّامٍ أُخَرَ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ ﴾

*"So let those of you who witness it fast [in] it, and as for someone who is sick or on a journey, let it be a [similar] number of other days. Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you…".*[1]

﴿ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ حَرَجٍ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ﴾

*"Allah does not desire to put you to hardship, but He desires to purify you, and to complete His blessing upon you…"*[2]

In legislative will, God's will is realized in the system of legislation and the enactment of laws, according to His commandments. In the two aforementioned verses, God says that in the system of legislation there is no hardship or difficulty. It is only purification and the completion of blessings.

It is now necessary to look at the Verse of Purification for us to see whether His will in this verse is creational or legislative. If it is legislative, the meaning of the verse will be this that God, in the system of legislation and enactment of law, has willed that you, the people of the House of the Prophet, should not sin; or that God has

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[1]. *Qur'an* 2:185.
[2]. *Qur'an* 5:6.

willed that you should abstain from impurities. That is to say, He has enacted laws and commandments which, if acted on, will protect you from sin;or He has, with regard to purity and impurity, made laws and has required you to act on them, so that you may be clean and pure.

But one who is impartial and a little attentive will not subscribe to this interpretation. I appeal to the clean conscience of the readers. Is it acceptable to say that to prove the merit of the Household of the Prophet (s) God should tell them that He has honoured them and desired that they should not sin, or that He has made laws about purity and impurity and has required them to act on them for their bodies and clothes to be clean? Shunning sins and keeping away from impurities is not limited to the people of the Household of the Prophet (s). God has required this of all legally bound mature adults.

If the purport of purity was this same interpretation, there was no need for all those formalities, and there was no need for the Prophet (s) to cover the people of his house with a cloak, lest others be included in the meaning of the verse. There was no need for stopping his wife, Umm Salamah, from entering under the cloak. Had God not required Umm Salamah to shun sin and purify her body and clothes? Besides, if Umm Salamah had understood this same meaning from the Verse of Purification, why was she insisting on entering the cloak in order to be included in the meaning of the verse?!

The story of the ‘Companions of the Cloak’ and the Verse of Purification had a certain extraordinariness which the people of the House of the Prophet (s) took pride in. It found so much prevalence among Muslims that those

limited number of people were called the Companions of the Cloak. The people of the House of the Prophet (s) would occasionally speak about this great merit and keep its memory alive.

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) argued with Abu Bakr about the case of Fadak and said, "O Abu Bakr! Was the Verse of Purification revealed in regard to me or you?" Abu Bakr responded, "[It was revealed] in regard to you." Likewise, in the Consultative Council of Six that was convened after 'Umar's death to select the caliph Imam 'Ali ('a) asked those present, "Apart from me and the people of my house, is there anyone among you about whom the Verse of Purification was revealed?" They all answered, "No."

Imam Hasan, after the sad demise of his honourable father, gave a sermon to the people of Kufa, in which he said, "I am one of the people of the House of the Prophet (s), in regard to whom the Verse of Purification was revealed, and whom God has cleaned and purified." Later too, the people of the House of the Prophet (s) would take pride in that great merit and keep its memory alive.

Now I ask the pure conscience of the readers, "Do you suppose that in all these events the Prophet (s), 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), Imam Hasan ('a), Imam Husayn ('a) and the rest of the Imams ('a) wanted to say that the Almighty God had granted them such a great merit and required them to shun sin and purify their bodies and clothes!?" If this was the meaning, then why did not even one person from among the people rise up to ask why they spoke so much about the Verse of Purification and took pride in it, when this was not a merit, for God had required all of them to shun sin, and to purify their bodies and clothes? I

do not think any person of study will be ready to interpret the verse in this way; unless he is fanatical and obstinate or has ulterior motives or some disease.

On the basis of these explanations, it is impossible to interpret the verse to mean legislative will. Rather, we have no choice but to interpret it to mean creational will. Then the meaning of the verse will be thus, "The Almighty God has willed and in the system of creation has ordained that the Household of the Prophet (s) should be free from sin and inner impurity." God's speaking of the greatness of this command, the Prophet's diligence in specifying who the Household of the Prophet (s) are, as well as the pride and assertions of 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), Imam Hasan ('a), Imam Husayn ('a) and the rest of the people of the House of the Prophet (s), will be considered as rational and acceptable acts due to the great merit of this verse which proves the station of infallibility of the people of the House of the Prophet (s).

Apart from all of this, we have traditions which interpret the verse to mean infallibility. For example, Ibn 'Abbas has quoted the Prophet (s) as saying, "God divided people into two kinds and put me among the best of them. As He has said:

﴿وَأَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ﴾

*"And the People of the Right Hand – what are the People of the Right Hand?"*[1]

[1]. *Qur'an* 56:27.

﴿وَأَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ﴾

*"And the People of the Left Hand – what are the People of the Left Hand?"*[1]

Thus, I am one of the People of the Right Hand, and I am the best of them.

Then He divided people into three kinds and put me among the best of them. As He has said:

﴿فَأَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ۝ وَأَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ ۝ وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ﴾

*"The People of the Right Hand – and what are the People of the Right Hand? And the People of the Left Hand – and what are the People of the Left Hand? And the Foremost Ones are the foremost ones…"*[2]

On this basis, I am one of the foremost, and I am the best of them.

Thereafter He divided people into tribes and put me in the best of them. As He has said:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ﴾

*"…and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you."*[3]

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1. *Qur'an* 56:41.
2. *Qur'an* 56:8-10.
3. *Qur'an* 49:13.

So, I am the most pious and the most honoured of the descendants of Adam (‘a), but I do not boast because of this.

And then He divided people into families and put me in the best of families. As He has said:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾

*“Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.”*[1]

Therefore, my Household and I are free from sin, and we are infallible.”[2]

‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) said, “The merits of the people of the House of the Prophet (s) are many; because, he God said about them:

﴿إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾

*“Indeed Allah desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the Household, and purify you with a thorough purification.”*[3]

For this reason, God has purified us from all external and internal evils, and He has put us on the path of truth.”[4]

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1. *Qur’an* 33:33.
2. *Al-Durr al-Manthur*, vol. 5, p. 199.
3. *Qur’an* 33:33.
4. *Ghayat al-Muram*, vol. 3, p. 199.

### *Objection*

Some people have objected that the Verse of Purification is not proof of infallibility; because, it has been revealed within verses about the Prophet's (s) wives. That is to say, the verses before and after it concern, and address, the wives of the Prophet (s). Besides, on the basis of contextual clues, it has to be said that the Verse of Purification also has special reference to the wives of the Prophet (s). So, if the Verse of Purification is a proof of infallibility, we have to consider the wives of the Messenger (s) to be infallible also. However, no one has or can say this. Hence, we should say that the Verse of Purification includes the Prophet's wives; but, it does not at all signify infallibility – not of the Prophet's wives, nor of other people of the House of the Prophet (s).

### *Response*

'Allamah Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din has recounted this objection, and has responded to it in a number of ways:

1. The aforesaid possibility is independent jurisprudential reasoning (*ijtihad*) in contradiction to an explicit textual statement (*nass*); because in many successively transmitted traditions the reason for this verse's revelation has been stated. These signify that the Verse of Purification was revealed with regard to the Prophet (s), 'Ali ('a), Fatimah, Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a). God's Prophet (s) covered them with his cloak and recited the verse. In response to Umm Salamah, 'Aisha and Zaynab, who had asked if they also were people of his house, he

said, 'Stay put. You, Umm Salamah, are also a good person'.

2. If the Verse of Purification was revealed in regard to the Prophet's wives, it should have been in the feminine form, not in the plural masculine form.

3. It is conventional among articulate Arabs to have parenthetical sentences in between their speech. In the Qur'an also, parenthetical sentences have been used; for example:

﴿ فَلَمَّا رَأَى قَمِيصَهُ قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ قَالَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيمٌ ۝
يُوسُفُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا وَاسْتَغْفِرِي لِذَنْبِكِ إِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ ﴾

*"So when he saw that his shirt was torn from behind, he said, 'This is [a case] of you women's guile! Your guile is great indeed! Joseph, let this matter alone, and you, woman, plead for forgiveness for your sin, for you have indeed been erring'."*[1]

The sentence 'Joseph, let this matter alone' is a parenthetical sentence which has been used in the discourse.

Therefore, why should we not say that the Verse of Purification is a parenthetical sentence revealed between verses concerning the Prophet's (s) wives? God put the Verse of Purification among those verses in order to allude to this point that because the people of the House of the Prophet (s) are infallible, they should not be oppressed; even the Prophet's (s) wives should respect them.

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[1]. *Qur'an* 12:28-29.

4. While it is true that distortion has not taken place in the Qur'an and nothing has been added to, or deleted from the heavenly verses and words, it is nonetheless not clear whether the verses and chapters from the Qur'an have been gathered and compiled in exactly the same order that they were revealed. For example, it is not impossible that the Verse of Purification was revealed alone and in regard to the people of the House of the Prophet (s), but when gathering the verses and compiling the Qur'an it was placed – deliberately or not – in between verses concerning the Prophet's (s) wives.[1]

***Note***

From the study and examination of the traditions which have been recorded as reasons for the revelation of the Verse of Purification, it is completely clear that the foregoing story was not a natural and ordinary matter. It is not the case that the Prophet (s) had eaten and wanted to have a rest with his daughter, son in law, and two grandsons. So he spread his woolen cloak over them, took his two grandsons in his arms, and slept. Then fatherly love caused him to pray for them. Contrary to this, from the study and careful examination of all the traditions [related in this regard], it is deduced that it was a totally extraordinary event and sleeping was not involved at all.

It has been recorded in the traditions that the Prophet (s) put Hasan ('a) and Husayn ('a) on his lap and had 'Ali ('a) and Fatimah ('a) sit opposite him. Then he spread a woolen cloak over them, prayed for them, and recited the

[1] 'Allamah Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Din, *Kalimat al-Ghara' fi Tafdil al-Zahra*, p. 213.

Verse of Purification. God's Prophet (s) thus wanted to precisely specify the instances of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (i.e. people of the House of the Prophet (s)), and close the way of misuse, lest others should want to falsely introduce themselves to the Muslims as people of the House of the Prophet (s).

If this matter was completely ordinary, then why did the Prophet (s), every morning for seven months [in a row], pass by Zahra's (‘a) house and recite for them the Verse of Purification? Was it not for other people to hear, so that they could relate it to others?! And why were ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) and his sons continually repeating this matter, taking pride in it, and using it as proof of their merit!?

## INFALLIBILITY IN THE TRADITIONS

There are many traditions in the books of tradition which signify that the Imam is infallible; for instance:

Imam Rida (‘a) has said, "When God chooses a man to manage the affairs of His servants, He expands his chest for that position, makes his heart a source of wisdom and continually inspires him with His knowledge. After this he is capable of responding to any problem, and is not confused in finding the way of truth. Therefore, he is infallible, he is always a confirmer [of truth], successful, and on the right path. He is protected from wrong and error. God has especially chosen him for this position, so that he may be a proof for His servants and a witness over

His creation. This is a merit from God, which He gives to anyone He wants, and God has great merit."[1]

Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "An Imam is a chosen and exemplary individual. He is a guide especially devoted to supplication (to the Lord of the Cosmos). He is one who rises up and inspires hope. God has chosen him for this position, and has created him with His special attention in the world of pre-existence and later on in the world of creation. Before the creation of animals, he was an apparition on the right hand side of the Divine Throne. He was given knowledge and wisdom in the unseen world. God has appointed him to the position of Imamate due to his knowledge and inner purity. The Imam is the best offspring of Adam and Noah, the selected of the Children of Abraham, the epitome of the Children of Isma'il, and the choosen one from the progeny of Muhammad (s). The Imam is always the object of God's attention, and God guards and protects him with His shield. He is immune from Satanic traps and from dark and corrupting temptations. He is prevented from committing bad deeds. He is pure and free from all defects. From the beginning of his growth and maturing, he acquires knowledge of patience and goodness, and becomes well known for his chastity, knowledge, and virtue."[2]

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) said, "You know that the one who has leadership and guardianship over the Muslims' intimate women, lives, wealth, and laws should not be greedy; because, if he were greedy he would misuse their property. He should not be ignorant, lest he misleads them

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[1]. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 202.
[2]. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 204.

with his ignorance. He should not have bad morals; for he would drive them away with his bad temper. He should not be oppressive; because he would get along with some people and not with others. He should not accept bribery; otherwise, he would trample on people's rights and judge against the truth. He should not suspend the Divine Laws and traditions, or else the [Islamic] nation would fall into perdition."[1]

'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) said, "The Imam from us is definitely infallible. Infallibility is not something which can be distinguished by people in the appearances of creation. That is why the Imam cannot be chosen except by way of divine decree. He was asked, 'O son of God's Prophet (s)! What is the meaning of infallibility?' He answered, 'An infallible person is one who has taken recourse to the rope of God; and, the rope of God is the Holy Qur'an. The Imam and the Holy Qur'an will never be separated until the Resurrection Day. The Imam leads the people to the Holy Qur'an, and the Holy Qur'an also leads the people to the Imam. Proof of this is the verse which states that this Holy Qur'an leads to the moderate and right path.'"[2]

Salim bin Qays related that he heard Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) say, "Obedience to anyone, except to God, the Prophet and those endowed with authority, is not obligatory. Whereas obedience to those endowed with authority is obligatory because they are infallible and free

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1. *Nahj al-Balaghah,* sermon no. 131.
2. *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 25, p. 194.

from sin. That is to say, they are pure and do not give orders that are contrary to God's laws."[1]

Ibn 'Abbas related, "I heard the Prophet (s) say, 'I, 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn and nine of the sons of Husayn are pure and infallible.'"[2]

Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "We are guardians of God's knowledge and interpreters of His commandments. We are infallible and free from sin. God has made obedience to us obligatory and disobedience to us is forbidden. We are God's proofs on earth and in the sky."[3]

Imam Rida ('a) said, "The Imam is one who is knowledgeable and free from sin."[4]

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) has quoted God's Prophet (s) as saying, "Whoever wishes to look at a branch of the ruby-coloured tree that has been planted in Paradise should love 'Ali and the Imams from his children; because, they are God's chosen ones, infallible, and free from all sins and mistakes."[5]

Husayn Ashqar said he asked Hisham bin Hakam what they meant when they said the Imam was infallible; whereat he said, "I asked Imam Sadiq ('a) the same question; and, he answered that an infallible person is one who, on account of divine confirmation, shuns all sins.

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1. *Ithbat al-Hudah,* vol. 1, p. 232.
2. *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah,* vol. 2, p. 316.
3. *Usul al-Kafi,* vol. 1, p. 269.
4. *Usul al-Kafi,* vol. 1, p. 200.
5. *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 25, p. 193.

The Qur'an states that whoever takes refuge in God will be guided to the straight path."[1]

Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "Prophets and their vicegerents do not sin; because, they are infallible."[2]

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) said, "I have reason and proof from God. I am on the path of the prophet. I am traveling a bright path. I easily understand the truth. You should heed the people of the House of the Prophet (s) and not lose their path. Follow them, for they will not mislead you from the right to the wrong path. If they stop, you should stop; and, if they move, you should move. Do not try to overtake them, otherwise you will lose the way. And, do not lag behind them, or else you will come to destruction."[3]

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) said, "Why are you confused about finding the way of truth, while the Prophet's progeny are among you? They are leaders of the truth, standard bearers of religion, and speakers of the truth. Consider the Prophet's progeny as being the same as the Qur'an and rush to them like thirsty people."[4]

Ibn Abi al-Hadid said, "There is great meaning hidden in the Commander of the Faithful's statement that the Prophet's progeny are the same as the Holy Qur'an; because, he is telling the people to put the Prophet's offspring at the same level with the Qur'an. This means that in the same manner that they follow the injunctions

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1. *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 25, p. 194.
2. *Bihar al-Anwar,* vol. 25, p. 199.
3. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, p. 143, sermon no. 97.
4. *Ibid*, p. 119, sermon no. 87.

and commandments from the Qur'an unquestioningly they should also follow the Prophet's children's injunctions and commandments unquestioningly. This statement shows that the Prophet's progeny are infallible and free from sin."[1]

Imam Baqir ('a) said, "The Household of the Prophet ('a) are leaders of religion, about whom God has said, 'O you who have believed! Obey God and the Prophet and those among you who are endowed with authority.' They are infallible, free from sin, and always on the straight path."[2]

Salim bin Qays has quoted Amir al-Mu'minin as saying, "God has made us pure and infallible. We are witness and proof over the people on earth. He has made us the same as the Qur'an, and He has made the Qur'an the same as us. We never separate from the Qur'an, and the Qur'an never separates from us."[3]

One of the traditions which can be used as proof for the infallibility of the Imams ('a) is the well-known *Tradition of Thaqalayn*, that is to say the tradition of the two weighty things. The *Tradition of Thaqalayn* is one the successively transmitted and definitely issued traditions which both Sunnis and Shi`ah have related. It is found with different phrases and chains of transmission in the books of the two sects.[4] We will relate one of them as an example.

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1. *Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, vol. 6, p. 376.
2. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 23, p. 19.
3. *Usul Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 191.
4. More than thirty of the Prophet's companions have reported the *Tradition of Thaqalayn*. From the Prophet's time up to now this

Abu Sa'id Khidri related that he heard the Prophet (s) say, "O people! I leave among you two precious and great things. If you hold fast to them, you will never go astray. One of them is greater than the other. One of those two trusts is the Book of God, which is the means of connection between the earth and the sky. The other trust is my progeny and Household. Be aware, the Prophet's progeny and the Qur'an will never separate until the Resurrection Day."[1]

If the tradition is carefully examined, a number of issues can be deduced from it:

1. According to this tradition, the Prophet's (s) offspring and the pure Imams ('a) must be infallible and free from sin and error; because God's Prophet (s) clearly tells the people that if they follow his progeny and act according to their words and conduct, they will not go astray or become mistaken. It is clear that this issue can only be stated when the Prophet's (s) progeny and the pure Imams ('a) are infallible and free from sin and error. If they were not infallible, it would be possible for them to misguide people with their words and acts. In the end, the people

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tradition has been successively transmitted generation to generation. It has been recorded, with different phrases and chains of transmission in the Sunni and Shi`ah books of traditions. It is found in the authentic and authoritative Sunni books of traditions. Sayyid Hashim Bahrani has related thirty nine traditions through Sunni sources and seventy two traditions through Shi`ah sources in his book titled *Ghayat al-Muram,* pp. 211-236. Mir Hamid Husayn Hindi has devoted one book, titled *'Abaqat',* to narrations of this tradition. The origin of the tradition is not in doubt, and it has been accepted among the two sects.

[1]. *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 102.

would lose the straight path of religion and fall into perdition and misguidance. However, God's Prophet (s) had said in general, "If you follow my progeny, you will never go astray."

2. In this tradition God's Prophet (s) has introduced his Household ('a) as an authentic source of knowledge and a responsible position of leadership. He has approved of their words and deeds. Therefore, all Muslims, even those who do not believe in the Imamate of the Household of the Prophet (s), have been obligated to learn religious laws and commandments from them, and follow their orders.

3. From the Prophet's saying that the Qur'an and his progeny will never separate until the Resurrection Day, it may be deduced that both the Qur'an and the Prophet's progeny will remain (present) until the Resurrection Day. Therefore, there is no period or time in which the earth is without an Imam.

### *Objection*

In the supplications that have reached us, the Pure Imams have admitted to sin and error, and have asked God for forgiveness. They wept out of fear of God, the punishment of Hell, and the difficulties of the Resurrection. In spite of all these clear confessions, how can one say they are infallible and free from sin!? They themselves acknowledge, by weeping and wailing, that they have sinned and erred, and ask God for forgiveness. And yet one says that they are infallible and free from sin!?

***Response***

After demonstration of the infallibility of the Pure Imams (‘a) with intellectual proofs, verses from the Qur’an, and traditions, we have no choice but to explain and interpret such supplications, when the authenticity of their chains of transmission has been proved. They cannot hold up to the definitive intellectual proofs, verses from the Qur’an, and traditions which consider infallibility in the Imam to be a condition. Such supplications can be explained in the following manner:

First: The Pure Imams (‘a), on the one hand, witness the infinite greatness and power of the Lord of the Universe, and on the other hand, see their own essential poverty and existential imperfection. Hence, they consider their acts of worship as nothing and undeserving in front of God. They have certainty that no matter how diligent they are in worshipping God, they cannot carry out His right, and they cannot perform acts that are deserving of the station of His Lordship. Therefore, they consider their undeserving acts as a kind of sin and imperfection. They cry for their lack of worthiness and ask God for forgiveness.

The perfection and imperfection of an act is measured in relation to its agent and the person for whom he performs the act. One ordinary and simple man presents a worthless gift to a great person. Because he does not notice the greatness of the great person and the worthlessness of his own gift, he takes pride in it and expects, in return for it, hundreds of expectations. But a scholar and a man with understanding, who has knowledge of the subleties, great station and position of that person, presents a precious and

invaluable gift but feels shy to present it. He asks this person with a great position to forgive him. He has not done anything wrong; but, he is afraid of this man's greatness and power, and ashamed of his own inability. Perhaps the Imams' (‘a) weeping, wailing, and asking for forgiveness are of this category.

Second: Because the Pure Imams (‘a) traverse the path of human progress and perfection, and pass the stations of perfection one after another, when they reach a higher level they view their former states and acts of worship and express shame and regret over their imperfection and worthlessness. They ask the Lord of the worlds to forgive them.

Third: One of the Imams' (‘a) ways of guidance and propagation was teaching supplication. Especially when they were under pressure from the caliphs of their time and were unable to freely propagate and spread Islamic sciences, they took recourse to supplication. By means of teaching supplication they would teach the people religious truths and sciences, and thereby guide them. For this reason, it can be said that the infallible Imams (‘a) wanted to teach the people the manner of supplicating and speaking with God by means of supplication.

By teaching those supplications they reminded the people that they were sinners and must, with weeping and wailing, heed God and ask for forgiveness for their evil and bad deeds.

In any case, after proving the infallibility of the Pure Imams (‘a) we have no choice but to interpret and explain these kinds of outer manifestations with such explanations or to use other explanations such as shunning the actions

which had priority *(tark ula*) or performing acts by means of bodily parts and limbs other than acts of worship.

# *PART FOUR*

# *THE IMAM'S ('A) KNOWLEDGE*

## KNOWLEDGE OF ISLAMIC LAWS

According to Shi`ah Twelver belief, the *Imam* must know all religious laws and canons that are necessary for man's felicity in this world and the next. He must know good and bad morals, true and false beliefs, and, in general, all that is necessary for the guidance of man and the management of affairs in this world and the next. In a nutshell, he must know all the laws God has revealed; and this can be proved in two ways:

First way – Those same proofs which have been presented to demonstrate the necessity of the Imam's being suffice to prove his knowledge. In previous discussions, two or three arguments were presented to prove the necessity of the Imam's being. A thorough discussion was given there[1] in this regard, and repetition of that discussion is not useful. However, we will provide a brief reminder:

In the first proof it was said that there must always be, among mankind, one perfect man and exemplar of the whole of religion. A man in whom all human perfections have been realised, and who from head to foot is a model of faith and piety. In this way, the path of religion and attainment to perfection will not remain without an objective and leader. In addition, the connection between the unseen world and mankind should remain preserved.

The prerequisite of this necessity is that the *Imam* must know all the realities and laws of religion, because one

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[1]. This is Part Two of this same book.

who is an exemplar of religion and has realised the inner aspect and reality of religion must know all the laws and realities of religion. He should be aware of the spirit and inner aspects of religion, and should have realised their reality, for acting is a derivative of knowing. He acts on them because he knows religious laws and witnesses them with the inner eyes. He has attained the reality and inner aspect of religion, so how can he possibly be unaware of its laws and commandments? He is literally on the straight path of religion. How can it be imagined that he is ignorant of its laws? He is the estuary of the emanations of the Almighty Truth and the guide of human beings. How can he possibly be ignorant of religious laws?

In the second argument it has been said that God the Wise, who created man, put him on the path to completion, and equipped him with the needed strength, never leaves him in misguidance. His infinite benevolence requires that He put at man's disposal the way of achieving worldly happiness and attaining spiritual perfections. For this same reason, He has revealed and put at his disposal, through his chosen Prophets (s), the laws which are necessary for the management of worldly matters and traversing the path of spiritual perfections.

The Prophet (s) does not live among mankind forever, but religious laws must remain among them and the way of reaching perfection must remain open forever. Therefore, after the Prophet (s) there must be an infallible individual among the people to protect the laws without making any additions or subtractions. This individual must diligently endeavour to guide the people, execute Divine Laws, and prepare the environment for traversing the way of perfection and nurturing human beings. In this way, the

people will always have access to Divine Laws and the straight path of religion. Then, they may refer to these when necessary. Such an infallible individual, who is the custodian and keeper of laws, and manages the social affairs of the nation, is in legal terminology an '*Imam*'.

This demonstration considers the existence of the *Imam* for the protection and preservation of laws to be necessary. Therefore, its prerequisite is this that the *Imam* should know all religious laws, without adding or deleting anything, so that through him the path of attaining Divine Laws should be open. Since the *Imam* is the leader of the people's religion and world, he should have at his disposal the necessary laws and programmes so that he is able to solve their religious and social problems, and put at their disposal *haram* (licit) and *halal* (illicit) issues. He must also guide the human society to the goal of creation and human perfection in the best possible manner.

It is not possible that people would have a need in one of the issues related to religion and the *Imam* be unable to solve it; or, that he would not have the key to that problem. Because, the existence of the *Imam* was necessary for this very reason that he should solve the religious problems and close the way for excuses and pretexts.

### *An Imam's ('a) Knowledge from the Viewpoint of Islamic Traditions*

There have been many traditions reported regarding the knowledge of the Imams ('a). We will relate some of them here as examples:

1. 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) has said (about the Imams), "The essence of the Qur'an is with the Household of the Prophet ('a). They are the treasures of divine sciences. They only speak the truth. If they are silent, no one can overtake them."[1]

2. 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) has said (about the Household of the Prophet ('a)): They are the life of knowledge and the death of ignorance. Their forbearance signifies their knowledge, and their (outer) appearance is indicative of their inner reality. Their silence denotes the firmness of their logic. They neither oppose the truth nor differ about it."[2]

3. 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) has said, "Through the Household of the Prophet ('a), the truth settles in its (rightful) place and falsehood is uprooted. They have comprehended religion rationally, but a comprehension that is accompanied by understanding, memorisation, and observation [of scientific principles]. This is not a comprehension that is just for listening and narrating; because, transmitters of knowledge are many but those who observe [its principles] are few."[3]

4. `Abdullah bin Sulayman 'Amiri has quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "God always has a proof on the earth, who must know the *halal* (licit) and *haram* (illicit), and invite people to God."[4]

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1. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, p. 215, sermon no. 154.
2. *Ibid,* p. 357, sermon no. 239.
3. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, p. 357, sermon no. 239.
4. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 178.

5. Zurarah and Fadil have quoted Imam Sadiq (‘a) as saying, “The knowledge that came (down) with Adam (‘a) has not been destroyed; rather, it has remained through the Torah. ‘Ali was the scholar of this nation. No scholar from among us dies without putting one of his own, who has his knowledge or knows what God wants, in his place.”[1]

6. Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, “God clarifies His religion through the Imams of the Household of the Prophet (‘a). Through them He makes clear the springs of His knowledge. Whoever knows the obligatory right of the Imam tastes the sweet taste of faith and understands the grace and beauty of Islam; because, God has made the Imam (‘a) the standard of guidance and proof for the inhabitants of the earth. He has placed on his head the crown of dignity and greatness. The almighty light has permeated his being. He is divinely confirmed. His knowledge does not come to an end. It is not possible to attain the things which are with God except through means. God does not accept the knowledge of His servants except through the knowledge of the Imam (‘a). The Imam knows the problems of revelation, the difficulties of traditions, and the mistakes raised by seditions. God always chooses the Imams for the people from the descendants of Husayn (‘a).”[2]

7. ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) said, “Yes, God will never leave the earth without a deputy who rises up for God with proof; whether apparent and seen, or hidden and unseen. This is so that God’s clear proof and evidence do not become invalid. How many are they, and where are they?

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1. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 222.
2. *Yanabi‘ al-Mawaddah,* vol. 1, pp. 80-81.

By God! Numerically they are few; but, before God they have a great station.

God safeguards His clear proof and evidence through them until they entrust these to others similar to themselves. They nurture this in their hearts. Knowledge has taken them to the reality of discernment, and they have reached the spirit of certainty. What others consider difficult is easy for them. They are accustomed to that which is fearsome to the ignorant. They live in the world with bodies whose spirits are attached to the divine. They are God's caliphs on earth and summoners to religion."[1]

8. Imam Hasan ('a) said, "The Imams ('a) will come from us, and the caliphate is not right for other than us. God has made us people of the caliphate in the Book and traditions. Knowledge is among us, and we are people of knowledge. All knowledge is with us. Until the Resurrection Day nothing will happen – even the blood money of one scratch – save that we have knowledge about it, by the dictation of the Prophet (s) and the handwriting of 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a)."[2]

9. Muhammad bin Muslim has quoted Imam Baqir ('a) as saying, "Knowledge is transmitted through inheritance. No scholar leaves the world without putting someone in his place who knows the sciences and whatever God wants."[3]

10. Harith bin Mughayrah said he heard Imam Sadiq ('a) say, "The knowledge that was brought down with Adam ('a) did not go back up. No scholar leaves the world

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1. *Nahj al-Balaghah,* p. 496, sermon no. 147.
2. *Ihtijaj Tabarsi*, vol. 2, p. 287.
3. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 222.

without leaving his knowledge to another one; because, the earth will not remain without the existence of a scholar."[1]

11. Khathimah related that Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "We are the tree of prophethood, the house of mercy, the key of wisdom, the mine of knowledge, the stronghold of the prophetic mission, the place of the angels' coming and going, and the place of the divine secrets. We are God's trusts and a great, divine sanctum. We are the promise and covenant of the Lord of the Worlds. We are God's pledge. Whoever is true to our covenant has been true to his promise to God; and, whoever breaks our covenant, breaks his pledge to God."[2]

12. Abu Basir has quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "God has two kinds of knowledge. One is the knowledge which no one has, and the other is the knowledge which the angels ('a) and the prophets ('a) have. The knowledge which the prophets ('a) and the angels ('a) have has also reached us."[3]

13. Surah bin Kalib has quoted Imam Baqir as saying, "We are the keepers of the divine sciences; not the keepers of gold or silver, but God's knowledge."[4]

14. Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "God created us and made our creation good. He depicted us, and made our appearance good. He made us the keepers of His knowledge in the earth and the sky. A tree spoke for us. With our worship

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1. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 223.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 221.
3. *Ibid,* vol. 1, p. 255.
4. *Ghayat al-Maram,* vol. 5, p. 208.

God is worshipped. If we did not exist, God would not have been worshipped."[1]

15. 'Abd al-Malik bin 'Ata related that he heard Imam Baqir ('a) say, "We are the masters of remembering God and knowledge. Knowledge of the *haram* (illicit) and the *halal* (licit) are with us."[2]

16. Abu Basir has quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "We are the tree of knowledge and the Household of the Prophet (s). Our houses are the place of the Archangel Gabriel's descent. We are the keepers of the divine sciences and the mines of divine revelation. Whoever follows us will be saved and whoever does not follow us will be destroyed."[3]

17. Imam 'Ali ('a) said, "We are the light of the sky and the arks of salvation. God's hidden knowledge is with us, and affairs return to us."[4]

18. Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "We are the protectors of the divine sciences and the explainers of His commandments. We are people who are infallible. God has made it incumbent on people to follow us, and He has forbidden them from disobeying us. We are conclusive proofs for the inhabitants of the earth and the sky."[5]

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1. *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 209.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 215.
3. *Ibid*, vol. 5, p. 210.
4. *Tadhkirat al-Khawas*, p. 130.
5. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 269.

## *Sources of the Knowledge of the Imams ('a)*

### *1-Use of Books*

The knowledge of the Imams ('a) is acquired through a number of ways:

The first way is the use of scrolls and books which they inherited from the Prophet (s). The circumstances of these books are as follows. The period from the Prophet's appointment to prophethood to the time of his passing away is approximately twenty-three years. For the first three years he invited people to Islam in complete hiding and secrecy. Except for a limited, few people, no one adopted the path of Islam.

Although later he was ordered to make his invitation public, the conditions nonetheless demanded that he should endeavour to reform the people's beliefs and be satisfied with explaining the basic and simple laws of Islam. He was faced with hundreds of difficult problems as he invited people to Islam. Neither the Prophet (s) nor his followers were safe from torture and murder. They were always being followed and tortured by the unbelievers to such an extent that sometimes they were forced to flee their homes and lives and emigrate to foreign countries.

The Prophet (s) and his companions, out of fear for their lives, sought refuge in the valley of Abu Talib ('a) and lived for three years in that burning prison. They lived in complete poverty and destitution. The Prophet (s) spent thirteen years of his prophethood in critical, dangerous and fearsome conditions.

In this period neither the thoughts of the individuals who had just recently become Muslims were prepared to learn religious laws and commands from the Prophet (s), nor did the problems and deplorable events that came to pass give a chance to the Prophet (s) to disseminate and propagate religious laws.

The Prophet (s) emigrated to Medina in the thirteenth year after appointment to prophethood. A number of Muslims also emigrated to Medina. When the Muslims emigrated to Medina, although they became free from the past tortures and torments of the polytheists, nevertheless they took on a more important and difficult duty. Here they had to defend Islam and the Muslims, and to fight for the advancement and progress of Islam. Medina became a military base, and the army of Islam was always in a state of preparedness. Every year a number of wars took place.

In this period of ten years also the thoughts of the Muslims were not prepared for learning religious and Islamic laws. The continuous problems from one side, the lack of ability and capacity from another side, and the people's forgetfulness from another side, were the causes which did not permit the Prophet (s) to teach the comprehensive and thorough laws of Islam. But he knew his death was approaching fast. Then the Muslims would wake up from their sleep and forgetfulness, and feel that they needed the laws and commands of Islam. However, there would no longer be access to the Prophet (s).

### *'Ali ('a) under the Prophet's (s) Training*

Since the Noble Prophet (s) was attentive to this matter from the beginning, and was aware of the future scientific

and religious needs of the nation, he was determined to redress this shortcoming. He stored this information for the time of need in one honest and infallible person. An order came from God to the Prophet (s) to choose 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) for this purpose, to entrust the prophetic sciences to him, and to teach and train him.

It has been written that when 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) reached the age of distinguishing good from bad, the people of Mecca faced a very severe famine. Abu Talib ('a) was a very respectable man, and he had a large family. The Prophet (s) brought 'Ali ('a) to his own home and made him part of his own family. He was diligent in teaching and training him, and guided him towards good morals and manners.[1]

The Prophet (s) told 'Ali ('a), "O 'Ali! God has ordered me to bring you close to myself, and to teach you my knowledge so that you may safeguard it. After this the verse:

﴿وَتَعِيَهَا أُذُنٌ وَاعِيَةٌ﴾

*"...and that receptive ears might remember it."*[2]

was revealed. Then he told 'Ali ('a), "You are a safeguarding ear."[3]

Ibn 'Abbas says the Prophet (s) said, "I asked God to make 'Ali ('a) the example of 'the safeguarding ear'." That is why 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) used to say, "I

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1. *Fusul al-Mihimmah*, vol. 1, p. 181; *Dhakha'ir al-'Uqba*, p. 58.
2. *Qur'an* 69:12.
3. *Ghayat al-Muram,* vol. 4, p. 88.

memorised that which I heard from the Prophet (s) and I will never ever forget it."[1]

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) said, "Certainly, you know my position of close kinship and special relationship with the Prophet of Allah (s). When I was only a child he took charge of me. He used to hold me in his lap, press me to his chest, lay me in his bed, bring his body close to mine, and I could smell his smell. He would chew something and feed me with it. He never heard a lie from me or saw a mistake in my deeds.

Allah had placed a mighty angel to watch over him constantly and guide him to good deeds and good behavior. I used to follow him like a young camel following its mother. He opened a door of knowledge upon me every day, and showed me good morals and manners. He commanded me to follow him.

He used to go into seclusion for a period of time to the Mount of Hira' every year, where no one saw him except Khadijah and I. In those days, Islam did not exist in any house except that of the Prophet of Allah (s) and Khadijah. And I was the third after these two in this family. I used to see the light of divine revelation and the message, and breathed the scent of Prophethood."[2]

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[1]. *Manaqib Khwarazmi,* p. 283; *Ghayat al-Muram*, vol. 2, p. 87. In *Ghayat al-Muram* nine traditions through Sunni sources and eight traditions through Shi`ah sources have been reported regarding this matter.

[2]. *Nahj al-Balaghah,* sermon no. 192; *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 208.

Ibn 'Abbas says that the Prophet (s) used to say, "When I went to God for intimate conversation He spoke with me, and whatever I learnt from God I taught 'Ali. Therefore, 'Ali is the door to my knowledge."[1]

### *The Station of 'Ali's ('a) Knowledge*

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), by means of innate ability and divine blessings and support, along with the Prophet's guardianship and effort and endeavour, acquired the prophetic sciences and became the treasure house of science and knowledge. He said about himself, "I swear to God that no verse was revealed to the Prophet (s) but I know about what, where and with regard to whom it was revealed; because, God has given me an eloquent tongue and an understanding heart.[2]

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) used to say, "Ask about the verses of the Qur'an from me, because I have knowledge about every single verse. I know whether it was revealed at night or during the day, on even ground, or on a mountain."[3]

Imam Husayn ('a) said, "When the verse:

﴿ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ ﴾

*"...and We have figured everything in a manifest Imam."*[4]

was revealed, the Prophet's companions asked him, 'Does this verse pertain to the Torah, the Bible, or the Qur'an?'

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1. *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 217.
2. *Ibid,* vol. 2, p. 408; *Nazm Darar al-Samtin*, p 126; *Manaqib Khwarazmi*, p. 90; *Tabaqat al-Kubra*, vol. 2, p. 338.
3. *Manaqib Khwarazmi,* p. 94.
4. *Qur'an* 36:12.

He answered, 'None of them.' Then he turned towards my father and said, 'This is the Imam in whom God has put all knowledge.'"[1]

'Ali ('a) used to say, "There is no verse in the Qur'an but I know about whom and where it was revealed. There is much knowledge in my heart. Ask me before you miss me... If I was not with the Prophet (s) when a verse was being revealed, he used to keep it and recite it for me when I returned to him. He would say, 'O 'Ali! Such and such a verses were revealed in your absence'; and, he would explain to me their meaning and revelation."[2]

'Ali used to say, "There is knowledge hidden in my heart, which if revealed, would make you tremble like a rope which is moving in a deep well."[3]

Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) used to say, "The Prophet (s) opened a thousand doors of knowledge to me, and from each door a thousand other doors opened up. Therefore, thousands of doors of knowledge have been opened for me, such that I have knowledge of the past and the future, of death and future events, and of the path of fate."[4]

'Ali used to say, "There is much knowledge in my heart, which the Prophet (s) taught me. If I had found protectors who would observe its rights and relate it in the same manner that they heard it, I would have entrusted some of this knowledge to them. I would have opened a door of

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[1] *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 230.
[2]. *Ibid,* vol. 1, p. 222.
[3]. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon no. 5.
[4]. *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 231.

knowledge for them from which a thousand other doors would open."[1]

***Why did he have more traditions than anyone else?***

They asked 'Ali ('a), "Why have you related more traditions than anyone else?" He answered, "Because whenever I asked the Prophet (s), he answered me; and, whenever I remained quiet, he began speaking himself."[2]

Salim bin Qays quoted Imam 'Ali ('a) as saying, "It was not such that each of the Prophet's companions was able to ask the Prophet (s) questions and able to understand the answers. Some people asked questions, but they were unable to understand the answer. Others were unable to ask questions. They loved for one of the Bedouin Arabs or a stranger to arrive and ask the Prophet (s) a question so that they could hear the answer. But I used to go the Prophet's house every day; once during the day and once in the evening. He would meet with me in private. I would follow him wherever he went.

The Prophet's companions know that such an opportunity did not arise for anyone but me. Sometimes he used to come to my house, and at times I would go to one of his houses. When I went to see him, he would tell his wives to leave and afford us privacy; but, when he came to our house neither Fatimah nor any of my children left. When I asked him, he responded; and sometimes, when I kept quiet, he began to speak. No verse was revealed to the Prophet (s) but that he dictated it to me, and I wrote it with my own hand. He explained to me their esoteric and

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1. *Ghayat al-Muram*, vol. 5, p. 219.
2. *Tabaqat al-Kubra*, vol. 2, p. 338.

exoteric interpretation, the abrogating and abrogated, the definite and the indefinite, and the particular and the general.

He asked God to grant me the power of understanding and safeguarding (memorizing) them; hence, I have not forgotten any verse or knowledge which he taught me. He taught me every *halal* (licit) and *haram* (illicit), every obligatory and forbidden thing that God had taught him, and every book that had been revealed to the former prophets ('a). I memorised all of them. I have not forgotten even one letter of them. Then he put his blessed hand on my chest and asked God to fill my heart with knowledge, understanding, wise judgement and light.

I asked him, 'O Prophet of God! May my father and mother be sacrificed for you! From the time that you prayed for me I have never forgotten anything. Do you still fear I may be beset by forgetfulness?' He said, 'I do not fear that you will suffer from forgetfulness or ignorance. I have confidence in this regard."[1]

### *The Prophet's (s) Confirmation*

In science and knowledge, 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) had reached a level where the Prophet (s) praised and corroborated his position saying, "May science and knowledge be palatable to you, O Abu al-Hasan. You have drunk knowledge like one who drinks water."[2]

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1. *Usul al-Kafi,* vol. 1, p. 4.
2. *Thakha'ir al-'Uqba,* p. 78; *Manaqib Kharazmi*, p. 84.

He also said, "I am the abode of wisdom, and 'Ali is its door."[1]

And he used to say, "I am the city of knowledge, and 'Ali is its gate. Whoever is a seeker of knowledge should enter by its gate."[2]

And he used to tell 'Ali ('a), "O 'Ali! I am the city of knowledge, and you are its gate. Anyone who thinks he can enter through other than the gate is lying [to himself]."[3]

### *'Ali ('a) and Writing the Prophetic Sciences*

'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) was infallible and free from error and forgetfulness. The Prophet (s) had asked God to keep him infallible. Therefore, he had no need for writing. However, he had been ordered by the Prophet (s) to write down in a book that which he heard and to bequeath it to the Imams ('a) after him.

Imam 'Ali ('a) said, "The Prophet (s) told me, 'O 'Ali! Write everything I dictate to you.' I said, 'O Prophet! Do you fear that I might forget?' He said, 'No, because I have asked God to make you a person who keeps the knowledge. But you should write for the Imams from your descendants. It is through them that the rains will fall on my nation. It is by way of their blessed existence that the supplications of the nation will be accepted. And, it is through them that punishment will be removed from the people and mercy will descend from the sky.' Then he

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1. *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 218; *Thakha'ir al-'Uqba,* p. 77.
2. *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah,* vol. 1, p. 219; *Manaqib Kharazmi*, p. 83.
3. *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah,* vol. 1, p. 220.

pointed to Imam Hasan ('a) and said, 'He is the first of them.' Then he pointed to Imam Husayn ('a) and said, 'He is the second of them.' Then he said, 'And the Imams are from the progeny of Husayn ('a).'"[1]

### *The Book of 'Ali ('a)*

'Ali ('a), on the Prophet's orders, used to write down scientific matters in a book. That book, or books, were bequeathed to the following Imams ('a). They continually referred to these books and said, "It has thus been written in the *Book of 'Ali,* in the *Sahifah,* and in the *Jami'ah."* Or, they would say, "I read this in the Book of 'Ali."

`Abdullah bin Sanan related that he heard Imam Sadiq ('a) saying, "We have a skin (scroll) of seven thousand two hundred and eighty centimetres, on which is written issues which the Prophet (s) dictated and 'Ali wrote with his own hand. All of the people's needs have been written on it; even the blood money for one scratch."[2]

Muhammad bin Muslim related that he asked the Imam ('a), "'Does the scientific heritage which has reached you consist of general knowledge only, or does it also comprise interpretation of all issues which the people discuss like divorce and inheritance?' The Imam ('a) said, ''Ali has written down all knowledge, from destiny to inheritance. If the time of our command comes, no issue will arise but that we have a tradition about it which we will execute."[3]

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1. *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah,* vol. 1, p. 73.
2. *Jami' Ahadith al-Shi`ah*, vol. 1, p. 133.
3. *Ibid,* vol. 1, p. 138.

Bakr bin Karab Sirafi related that he heard Imam Sadiq ('a) say, "We have a book which makes us have no need for the people, but (makes) the people need us. We have a book which was dictated by the Prophet (s) and written by the hand of 'Ali ('a). In it has been written all the *halal* (licit) and *haram* (illicit) issues. You refer to us about things which we know what will happen if you act on it, and what will happen if you do not act on it."[1]

### *Jafr and Jami'ah*

Abu 'Ubaydah related that some of the companions asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "What is *jafr*?" He answered, "It is a cow skin full of scientific matters." They asked, "What is *jami'ah*?" He responded, "It is a scroll made from tanned skin measuring seven thousand two hundred and eighty centimetres, the width of a camel's thigh. All of the people's scientific needs are present in it. There is no issue but that its judgement has been written in it, even the blood money for a scratch."[2]

Abu Maryam related that Imam Baqir ('a) told him, "The *jami'ah* is with us. Everything, even the blood money for a scratch, has been written it. It was dictated by the Prophet (s), and written by the hand of 'Ali ('a). The *jafr* also is with us. It is a skin from *'Akaz* which has been filled with writings. All of history and the future are there."[3]

### *Comprehension of All Traditions*

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1. *Usul Kafi,* vol. 1, p. 241.
2. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 241.
3. *Jami' Ahadith al-Shi`ah*, vol. 1, p. 132.

Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, “There is not a matter which ‘Ali (‘a) did not write; even the blood money for a scratch.”[1]

‘Adhafar Sirafi related that he and Hakam bin ‘Aina went to see Imam Baqir (‘a). Hakam asked questions from the Imam (‘a), and he answered them. Then they disagreed on a matter. Imam Baqir (‘a) told me to go and fetch a certain big book which was bundled together. When I brought it, he searched in it until he found the subject. Then he said, “This book was dictated by the Prophet (s) and written by the hand of ‘Ali (‘a).” Then he addressed Hakam, “O Aba Muhammad! You, Salamah, and Abu al-Miqdam can go anywhere you like, to the north or the south, but you will never find more valid knowledge than that which was revealed by Gabriel.”[2]

Jabir has quoted Imam Baqir (‘a) as saying, “O Jabir! Had we related traditions to you on the basis of our own opinions, we would have been ruined. But we relate to you traditions we have stored from the Prophet (s), in the same manner that people store gold and silver.”[3]

Mu‘ala bin Khanis has quoted Imam Sadiq (‘a) as saying, “The books were with ‘Ali (‘a); but, when he wanted to go to Iraq he left them with ‘Umm Salamah. When he passed away they were inherited by Imam Hasan (‘a), and when he [also] passed away they were inherited by Imam Husayn (‘a). And, when he was martyred they were

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1. *Ibid,* vol. 1, p. 133.
2. *Ibid*, 1, p. 133.
3. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 27.

handed over to 'Ali bin Husayn ('a). After that they were transferred to my father."[1]

Hirth bin Mughayrah has quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "The earth will never be without a scholar." Hirth asked him, "What kind of knowledge does this scholar have?" The Imam answered, "It has reached us by way of inheritance from the Prophet (s) and 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a). It is knowledge which makes us have no need for the people but makes the people need us." Hirth asked, "What about wisdom which is inspired into the heart or ears?" The Imam responded, "Yes, sometimes it belongs to that category."[2]

### *Conclusion*

From the above discussions, and from traditions that have been related as examples, it can be properly concluded that the Prophet (s) decided to put at the disposal of the Imams ('a) after himself all issues that the people needed and the laws of religion by one of the ways that were customary among the people. These ways include the writing and compilation of books. Through these means he prepared for them an outward or apparent advantage and merit, so that they would be able to directly make use of the prophetic knowledge and the laws that had been revealed through Gabriel ('a). Then, the Muslims could see the affairs and sciences of religion with the Imam ('a) and feel a need for them. In this way, they would be inclined to the Imams ('a), who are the treasure chests of prophetic knowledge. For this purpose, the Prophet (s)

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1. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 141.
2. *Ithbat al-Huda*, vol. 1, p. 248.

used to tell 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) some issues and 'Ali ('a) used to write them down with his own blessed hand. A book or books were prepared and were transferred, by way of inheritance, from one Imam to another Imam.

These books are some of the scientific documents of the pure Imams ('a). They cited from them as proof, and they used to show them to some of the special companions. They used to introduce them as the scientific heritage of the Prophet (s). With regard to these they used to say, "We relate this from the Prophet (s) through our fathers, if you want you can attribute this to our fathers ('a) or the Prophet ('s)."

Hisham bin Salim, Hamad bin 'Uthman, and others related that they heard Imam Sadiq ('a) say, "My tradition is the tradition of my father, my father's tradition is my grandfather's tradition, my grandfather's tradition is the tradition of Husayn ('a), Husayn's tradition is the tradition of Hasan ('a), Hasan's tradition is the tradition of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), 'Ali's tradition is the tradition of the Prophet (s), and the Prophet's tradition is the word of God."[1]

### *2- Use of the Qur'an*

One of the ways which the pure Imams ('a) used to acquire knowledge and infer laws was use of the Holy Qur'an; because, the origin and source of all religious laws and sciences is the Qur'an. However, not everyone can

[1]. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 52.

understand the depth and esoteric aspects of this divine book, and extract scientific truths.

Mu'ala bin Khanis quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "There is no controversial issue but its origin and root is in the Book of God; but, the people's intellects do not understand it."[1]

Abu al-Jarud related that Imam Baqir ('a) said, "When I tell you something, look for its reason in the Qur'an."[2]

Sama'ah related that he asked Imam Musa bin Ja'far, "Is everything in the Qur'an and the Prophet's tradition; or, do you sometimes speak from yourselves?" The Imam ('a) said, "We do not speak from ourselves; rather, everything is present in the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet."[3]

Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) said, "Bring the Qur'an to speech, but the Qur'an does not speak for you. However, I can give you news about it. There is knowledge of the past and the future in that heavenly book. The laws and issues that you have need are in that book; along with the interpretation of things you differ about. If you ask me, I will teach you."[4]

Salamah bin Muhriz related that he heard Imam Baqir ('a) say, "One of our sciences is the interpretation of the Qur'an and its laws. We also know the changes which come with time and new events. If God desires good for a group of people, he makes them hear. But when the word of truth reaches the ear of one who does not hear, he

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1. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 60.
2. *Ibid*.
3. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 62.
4. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 61.

ignores it, as if he had not heard it at all." He remained quiet for a while, and then he said, "Had I found deserving people with the capacity, I would have taught them scientific matters. God is the Helper and Safeguard."[1]

'Abd al-A'la Maula Al Sam related that he heard Imam Sadiq ('a) say, "I swear by God, I know the Book of God from beginning to end, as if it is in the palm of my hand. In this book there is information about the sky and the earth, and the past and the future. God says:

﴿وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تِبْيَانًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ﴾

*"We have sent down the Book to you as a clarification of all things…"*[2] [3]

Barid bin Mu'awiyah related that he asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "What is the meaning of the verse:

﴿ قُلْ كَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ ﴾

*"Say, 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book'."*[4]

The Imam ('a) said, '…and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book.' means us. 'Ali ('a) was the first, the most learned, and the best of us."[5]

Isma'il bin Jabir has quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "In the Qur'an there is knowledge about the past and the

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1. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 229.
2. *Qur'an* 16:89.
3. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 229; *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, p. 62.
4. *Qur'an* 13:43.
5. *Usul al-Kafi,* vol. 1, p. 229; *Yanabi' al-Mawaddah*, p. 119.

future, and about the laws of administering justice. We know these."[1]

Jabir has quoted Imam Baqir ('a) as saying, "No one but executors of the Prophet's will can claim to have knowledge of the exoteric (outer) and esoteric (inner) aspects of the Qur'an."[2]

***Conclusion***

It can be concluded, from such traditions, some of which have been related as examples, that the pure Imams ('a) used to infer many religious issues, laws, and sciences from the Qur'an. One of their scientific sources and documents was the heavenly book. They had knowledge of the secrets and esoteric meaning of the divine word, of the reason for revelation and the abrogating and abrogated, the general and the particular, the definite and the indefinite, and the *muhkam* (decisive) and *mutashabah* (allegorical). They could extract religious laws and Islamic sciences from the depths of the heavenly book, and put them at the disposal of the Muslims.

For this same reason, the Noble Prophet (s) has likened the Household of the Prophet ('a) to the Qur'an in the well-known, successively related, and definite *Tradition of Thaqalayn* (the two weighty things), and said, "I leave two great trusts among you. If you hold fast to them, you will not go astray; the Book of God and the people of my house. These two will never separate from each other untill the Resurrection Day."

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1. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 61.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 228.

Yes, God's Prophet (s) has introduced his Household ('a) as the scientific reference for the Muslims, and has confirmed their words and actions. He repeatedly used to say that if you go to the people of the House of the Prophet (s) and satiate your religious and scientific needs, you will never get lost.

According to the foregoing explanation, all Muslims are duty bound to refer to the Household of the Prophet (s) to learn the Islamic sciences and programmes, and to follow their words and actions. Even those people who do not accept their Imamate and caliphate – according to the Prophet's (s) clear order – must refer to the Household of the Prophet ('a) to learn the *halal* (licit things) and *haram* (illicit things) of Islam, and to acquire divine favour in the way that the Prophet (s) has introduced.

It is for this reason that we use traditions and reports of the people of the House of the Prophet (s) in discussions about the Imamate. Assuming that there are some people who doubt their Imamate, nonetheless according to the Prophet's very clear statement, they have to consider the Imams ('a) words and actions as authoritative.

### *3- Connection with the Unseen World*

The Imam's ('a) knowledge is not limited to the two aforementioned categories; rather, they also have another way. The third way is connection with the unseen world. Through their connection with the unseen world and inspiration their knowledge is increased. The best of their knowledge is acquired in this way. In this regard also, many traditions have been reported, some of which we will allude to as examples.

1. Imam Musa bin Ja'far ('a) said, "Our knowledge is of three categories: the past, the future and the present. Knowledge of the past has been interpreted for us, knowledge of the future has been written down for us, and knowledge of the present is inspired to our hearts and ears. It is this latter kind of knowledge which is the best of our knowledge; but, there is no prophet after our Prophet (s)."[1]

2. Harith bin Mughayrah related, "I asked Imam Sadiq ('a), 'How do you acquire your knowledge?' The Imam ('a) answered, 'It has been bequeathed to us by the Prophet (s) and 'Ali ('a).' I said, 'We have heard that your hearts and ears receive [divine] inspiration?' The Imam ('a) said, 'Or in that way.'"[2]

3. Mufaddal bin 'Umar related, "I told Imam Musa bin Ja'far ('a), 'It has been related to us that Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "Our knowledge is of various kinds: *Ghabir*, *Mazbur, Nukat* in the hearts, and *Naqar* in the ears.'' The Imam ('a) said, "*Ghabir* means knowledge of the past, *Mazbur* means knowledge of the future, *Nukat* means knowledge inspired to the hearts, and Inspiration and *Naqar* in hearing is the command of the angel."[3]

4. Safwan bin Yahya related that he heard Musa bin Ja'far say, "Ja'far bin Muhammad used to say that if no additions were made to our knowledge, it would get finished.[4]

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1. *Ibid*, p. 264.
2. *Ibid*, p. 264.
3. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 264.
4. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 254.

5. Dharih Muharibi says Imam Sadiq ('a) told me: If no additions were made to our knowledge, it would finish."[1]

6. Zurarah related that he heard Imam Baqir ('a) say, "If additions were not made to our knowledge, it would finish." Zurarah said, "Are things which the Prophet (s) did not know added to your knowledge?" He said, "If He (God) wants to add something new to our knowledge, first it is presented to the Prophet (s), then to the Imams ('a) one after the other until it reaches us."[2]

7. Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "Knowledge from God is not given unless it is first presented to the Prophet (s), then to Amir al-Mu'minin ('a), then to the rest of the Imams ('a) one after another, so that the last of our Imams should not be more knowledgeable than the first."[3]

8. Abu Yahya San'ani related that Imam Sadiq ('a) told him, "O Aba Yahya! On Thursday nights great things happen for us." Abu Yahya said, "May I be sacrificed for you, what great things?" The Imam ('a) said, "On Thursday nights the spirits of the Prophets ('a), the deceased Imams ('a), and the spirit of the living Imam ('a) are given permission to ascend the sky, until they reach the Divine Throne. They go around the Divine Throne seven times, and pray two units of prayer near each of the Throne's pillars. When they have finished this, they return to their bodies. Hence the Prophets ('a) and their

[1]. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 254.
[2]. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 255.
[3]. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 255.

successors become happy. And, much is added to the knowledge of the living Imam."[1]

9. Mufaddal narrated, "One day Imam Sadiq ('a) told me, 'O Aba 'Abdullah! – and he had never called me by my epithet before – there is happiness and joy for us on Thursday nights.' I said, 'May your happiness be increased! What kind of happiness?' He said, 'When Thursday nights arrives, God's Prophet (s) and the rest of the Imams ('a) ascend towards the Divine Throne. We go with them also. Therefore, our spirit does not return to our body except with knowledge (sciences) which have been acquired there. Otherwise our knowledge would finish.'"[2]

10. Imam Rida ('a) has said, "When God wants to choose someone to handle the affairs of His servants, He grants him forbearance, deposits in him springs of wisdom, and continually inspires knowledge to him. After that he is not incapable of answering any question, and he does not wander to find the right path. Hence he is infallible, confirmed and supported by God, and free from error and sin."[3]

### *Another Tradition*

11. Mufaddal bin 'Umar has quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "Solomon ('a) inherited from David ('a), Muhammad (s) inherited from Solomon ('a), and we inherited from Muhammad (s). With us is the knowledge of the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms (of David), and the

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1. *Ibid*, vol.1, p. 253.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 254.
3. *Ibid*, p. 202.

Scrolls (of Moses ('a)).'' Mufaddal said, "That is a lot of knowledge." The Imam ('a) said, "This knowledge is not very important; rather, important knowledge is that which is given to us every day and every hour."[1]

12. Daris Kanasi narrated, "I was with Imam Sadiq ('a). Abu Basir was also present. Then Imam Sadiq ('a) said, 'David ('a) inherited the knowledge of the prophets ('a), Solomon ('a) inherited the knowledge of David ('a), Muhammad (s) inherited the knowledge of Solomon ('a), and we inherited the knowledge of Muhammad (s). The Scrolls of Abraham ('a) and Moses ('a) are with us.' Abu Basir said, 'That is a lot of knowledge.' The Imam ('a) said, 'This knowledge is not very important. What is important is the knowledge which is inspired to us every day and night, and every hour of the day.'"[2]

13. Muhammad bin Isma'il related that he heard Imam Musa bin Ja'far ('a) say, "The Imams are scholars, truthful, enlightened, and *Muhaddith* (Inspired).[3]

14. Muhammad bin Muslim narrated that while he was with Imam Sadiq ('a) talk about the term *Muhaddith* was brought up. The Imam ('a) said, "A *Muhaddith* is one who hears the voice of the angel but does not see him." I asked him, "May I be sacrificed for you! How does he know that it's the angel's voice?" The Imam ('a) said, "Through the peace of mind and equanimity that he feels in that state."[4]

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1. *Ibid*, p. 224.
2. *Ibid*, p. 225.
3. *Ibid*, p. 271.
4. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 271.

15. Hamran bin A‘in narrated that Imam Baqir (‘a) said ‘Ali (‘a) was a *Muhaddith* (an inspired one). I went to the [Imam's] companions and said, "I have brought you a surprising matter." They said, "What [matter] have you brought?" I said, "Imam Baqir said that ‘Ali (‘a) was a *Muhaddith* (an inspired one)." The companions said, "You did not do well. Why didn't you ask who used to relate *hadith* (i.e. inspiration) to him?" When Hamran heard the companions' words, he returned to Imam Baqir (‘a) and said, "I narrated your statement to the companions. They told me, ‘Why didn't you ask who used to relate *hadith* (i.e. inspiration) to him?'" Imam Baqir (‘a) said, "An angel used to relate *hadith* (i.e. inspiration) to him." Hamran asked, "Are you saying ‘Ali (‘a) was a prophet?" The Imam answered, "No, he was not a prophet." Then he moved his hand and said, "He was like the companion of Solomon (‘a), the companion of Moses (‘a), or like Dhul Qarnayn (‘a). Has not the word of the Prophet (s) reached you, that he said, ‘Others like them will also be found among you?'"[1]

16. Hasan bin ‘Abbas wrote to Imam Rida (‘a), "May I be sacrificed for you! What is the difference between a messenger (*rasul*), and a prophet (*nabi*), and an *Imam* (worldly and spiritual leader)?" In response the Imam (‘a) wrote, "The difference between them is that a messenger is a man to whom [the Archangel] Gabriel (‘a) comes down. He sees Gabriel (‘a), hears his word, and revelation descends unto him. Sometimes also revelation is revealed to him in dreams; like the dream of the Prophet Abraham (‘a). However, a prophet sometimes hears the

[1]. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 271.

voice of the angel, and sometimes sees his person but does not hear anything. On the other hand, an *Imam* hears an angel but does not see his person."[1]

17. Ahul narrated, "I asked Imam Baqir ('a), 'What is the difference between a messenger, a prophet, and a *Muhaddith* (an inspired one)?' He said, 'A prophet is a person to whom [the Archangel] Gabriel ('a) comes down. He sees the angel and speaks with him. However, an apostle is a man to whom revelation is revealed in dreams; like the dream of Abraham ('a) or similar to that which was inspired to God's Prophet (s) before he was raised to prophethood. This was before the descent of Gabriel and before his prophethood. However, after the start of his messengership and prophethood, Gabriel descended and spoke with him. For some prophets, revelation was revealed to them and the Spirit used to descend for them when they were asleep. They used to speak and converse with him, but not when they were awake. But, a *Muhaddith* is a person who is told the *hadith*. They could hear the word of the angel, but they could not see him. And, revelation was not revealed to him while he was asleep."[2]

18. Jama'ah bin Sa'd narrated, "Mufaddal was with Imam Sadiq ('a). He said, 'May I be sacrificed for you, is it possible that God would make obedience to someone incumbent on the people yet keep hidden from him knowledge of the unseen?' The Imam (s) said, 'No, God is above making it incumbent on his servants to follow

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1. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 176.
2. *Ibid,* p. 261.

someone yet not putting divine knowledge at his disposal, morning and night.'"[1]

19. Abu Hamza narrated that he heard Imam Baqir ('a) say, "By God! One who has knowledge cannot become ignorant. It is not possible to have knowledge of one thing and be ignorant about another. God is above making obedience to someone incumbent on the people but keep hidden from him knowledge of the sky and earth. He does not keep hidden from him knowledge of the heavens and the earth."[2]

20. Imam 'Ali ('a) said, "God's Prophet (s) used to meditate in the Mountain of Hira' every year for aperiod of time. I would see him, and no one but me used to see him. At that time, no household had been formed in Islam except the Noble Prophet ('a) and Khadija; and I was the third of them. I used to witness the light of revelation and prophethood, and I used to smell the scent of prophethood. Once when revelation was revealed to the Prophet (s), I heard a voice and said, 'O Prophet! Whose voice is that?' He said, 'That is the cry of Satan who has lost hope. O 'Ali! You too hear what I hear and see what I see, but you are not a prophet. You are my vizier. You are good.'"[3]

21. Abu Basir related that he heard Imam Sadiq ('a) say, "Knowledge is added to us every day and night. Otherwise, our knowledge would come to an end." Abu Basir said, "May I be sacrificed for you. Who descends

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1. *Ibid*, p. 261.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 262.
3. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, p. 301, sermon no. 192.

upon you?" The Imam ('a) said, "Some of us witness the angel, and for some of us matters are inspired to our hearts. And, some of us hear the voice of the angel like a sound from a water basin." Abu Basir said, "May I be sacrificed for you! Who brings information for you?" The Imam ('a) said, "One of God's creatures, who is greater than Gabriel ('a) and Michael ('a)."[1]

22. Imam Baqir ('a) said, "'Ali ('a) used to act according to God's Book and the customs of the Prophet. When a new issue arose which was not in the Book or in the customs of the Prophet, God would inspire him with the truth. By God, this subject is one of the problems."[2]

23. 'Isa bin Hamza Thaqafi related that he asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "Sometimes I ask you a question, and you answer me immediately. Other times I ask you a question, and you are quiet before answering me. What is the reason for this?" The Imam ('a) said, "Answers to questions are inspired to our ears and hearts. Once inspired, we answer immediately. But, if the answer is delayed, we wait until it is inspired."[3]

24. Hasan bin Yahya Mada'ini related that he asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "How does an Imam answer the questions which he is asked?" The Imam ('a) replied, "Sometimes the answer is inspired, sometimes he hears an angel, and sometimes both."[4]

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1. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 54.
2. *Ibid*, p. 55.
3. *Ibid*, p. 57.
4. *Ibid*, p. 58.

25. Harith bin Mughayrah related that he asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "How does your scholar acquire knowledge? Is it inspired to his heart or spoken into his ear?" The Imam ('a) answered, "It is revealed to him; like revelation is to us."[1]

26. Sulayman Daylami related that he asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "Several times I have heard you say that if knowledge was not added to you, your knowledge would come to an end?" The Imam ('a) said, "However, all issues concerning the licit (*halal*) and the illicit (*haram*) have been revealed to the Prophet (s). In this regard nothing is added to our knowledge." I asked him, "Then on what subject is knowledge added to you?" The Imam ('a) said, "On things other than the licit and the illicit." I asked him, "Is anything added to your knowledge which was hidden from the Prophet (s)?" The Imam ('a) said, "No, whenever new knowledge comes from God the angel takes it first to the Prophet (s), then to 'Ali ('a), then to Hasan ('a), then to Husayn ('a), and – in a like manner – to all the Imams ('a), one after another, until it reaches us." I asked him, "Is it possible to have knowledge added to you which the Prophet (s) is ignorant about?" He said, "Woe unto you! Is it right for an Imam to know something of which the Prophet (s) and the Imams ('a) preceding him are ignorant about!?"[2]

From the foregoing traditions and tens of others like them, it is concluded that: the pure Imams ('a) also have connection with the Lord of the Worlds and the unseen world. They receive realities (or truths) in this way.

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1. *Ibid*.
2. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 92.

Almighty God inspires them through some angels, and in this way favours them with knowledge, perfections and realities. In traditional terminology this is called *ilham* (divine inspiration), *qadhaf* (disclosure to the heart), and *naqar* (whispering in the ears).

Therefore, it is not such that with the death of the Prophet (s) mankind's connection with God is cut off and the Imam is in a position of just explaining Islamic questions. Rather, for as long as man remains on the earth there is also connection with God. Spiritual favours continue to be granted by the Lord of the world through the Imam's holy being.

### *The Difference between an Imam ('a) and the Prophet (s)*

#### *Objection:*

One may say: If an Imam also has a connection with the unseen world and receives truths through inspiration, then what is the difference between the Prophet (s) and an Imam? Apart from this, it has also been said in some traditions that with the death of the Prophet (s) revelation came to an end. Such traditions do not agree with the foregoing conclusion.

For instance, Imam 'Ali ('a) said, "God sent the Prophet after there had been a gap since the previous prophets and there was much disagreement among the people. With him God sealed prophethood and ended revelation."[1] He ('a) also said, "May my father and mother be sacrificed for

[1]. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, p. 191, sermon no. 133.

you, O Prophet of God! With your death something stopped which had not stopped at the death of others (prophets). Because, with your death prophethood, revelation and heavenly messages have stopped."[1]

***Response***

Although many traditions confirm that the Imams receive divine inspiration and are in connection with the unseen world, nevertheless those same traditions explain the differences between an Imam ('a) and the Prophet (s).

**First difference**: It is concluded from traditions that an Imam is not a legislator. Laws concerning the *halal* (licit) and *haram* (illicit) are not revealed to him; rather, religious laws and commandments have been revealed in completion to the Prophet (s). Some of these he has put at the disposal of the Muslims; but, he taught all of them to 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a). Imam 'Ali ('a) also transmitted, orally and in writing, all of them to the Imam after him. In this same manner, they were transferred from one Imam to the next, up until now when they are at the disposal of the twelfth Imam ('aj).

Therefore, even if the Imams were explaining laws concerning the *halal* and *haram*, it was not in an independent manner. Rather, in these instances they were followers and disciples of the Prophet (s). They used to explain issues which had reached them through inheritance, or could be deduced from the Qur'an. Hence they used to say, "We are the treasure houses of prophetic knowledge. We are inheritors of the Prophet's knowledge.

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[1]. *Ibid*, p. 355, sermon no. 235.

The Prophet's knowledge has been written down in a book, or in books, and is at our disposal. We have complete knowledge of the reasons for revelation of the verses of the Qur'an along with both their exoteric and esoteric interpretations, of the abrogating and abrogated verses, and also of the general and particular verses." They used to say, "Our traditions are the traditions of our forefathers (ʿa), and the traditions of our forefathers (ʿa) are the traditions of God's Prophet (s)." Likewise, they used to say, "Had we given independent religious edicts, we would have been destroyed. What we say has been bequeathed to us from the Prophet (s)."

**Second difference**: It is concluded from traditions that the Imam too receives inspiration and has a connection with the unseen world; but, this revelation and inspiration is different from the revelation and inspiration of the prophets (ʿa). A prophet has contact with the unseen world, sees the angel of revelation, and sees the celestial world. However, an Imam's connection is not at this level.

An Imam does not see the angel. Matters are inspired to his heart, or he hears the angel and thus understands truths and realities. Revelation for an Imam is like revelation for the Prophet Solomon's companion, Prophet Moses' friend, Thul Qarnain, and Moses' mother.

**Third difference**: Prophets (ʿa) used to have direct contact with the unseen world and receive truths. In this regard, he did not need the confirmation and guidance of others, but the pure Imams (ʿa) needed the Prophet's confirmation and guidance. It was the Prophet's spiritual confirmation and esoteric allusions that made the Imam's heart luminous, prepared for divine emanations and

illuminations, and opened thousands of doors of science for him. It was the Prophet (s) who showed the Imams ('a) the fountainhead of knowledge and gave light to his insightful eye, so that he could refer to it in times of need and acquire favour.

Whatever is bestowed on the Imam is through the Prophet ('a). Even new issues which are inspired to the Imam are presented to the Prophet (s) first, then to the Imam after him, and this continues up to the present Imam. In this way an Imam receives divine grace.

### *Proof of these Statements*

You can deduce these matters from the foregoing traditions. For example, look at the following traditions:

1. Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "We can only explain to you laws of the *halal* (licit) and *haram* (illicit), but we are not prophets."[1]

2. Harith bin Mughayrah related, "Imam Baqir ('a) said, ''Ali ('a) was a *Muhaddith* (i.e. an inspired one).' I asked him, 'Are you saying 'Ali ('a) was a prophet?' The Imam ('a) moved his hand and said, ''Ali ('a) was like the companion of the Prophet Solomon ('a), the companion of Moses ('a), and like Dhul Qarnayn. Have you not heard that the Prophet (s) said that there will be some people like him amongst you?'"[2]

3. Barid bin Mu'awiyah related that he asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "What is your station; and, who do you resemble from the past?" The Imam ('a) answered, "We

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1. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 268.
2. *Ibid*, p. 269.

resemble Dhul Qarnain ('a) and the companion of Moses ('a). They were men of knowledge but not prophets."[1]

4. Muhammad bin Muslim narrated that he heard Imam Sadiq ('a) say, "The Imams ('a) are like the Prophet (s) but are not prophets, and they are not allowed to marry as many wives as the Prophet (s) was allowed. Apart from this, they are like him in other matters."[2]

5. Daylami related that he said to Imam Sadiq ('a), "Several times I have heard you say that if additions had not been made to your knowledge, it would have finished." The Imam ('a) said, "However, the *halal* (licit) and *haram* (illicit) have all been revealed to the Prophet (s), and in this regard nothing is added to an Imam." I asked him, "Then how are additions made to your knowledge?" He said, "In things other than the *halal* and *haram*."[3]

6. 'Abdullah bin 'Ajalan related that Imam Baqir ('a) said, "The verse '*O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you'* was revealed in regard to 'Ali ('a) and the rest of the Imams ('a). God has placed them at the level of prophets ('a), except that they do not make anything *halal* (licit) and *haram* (illicit)."[4]

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1. *Ibid*, p. 269.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 270.
3. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 92.
4. *Ithbat al-Hudah*, vol. 3, p. 48.

7. Sadir narrated, "I told Imam Sadiq ('a), 'Some people imagine that you are God, and to prove their claim they cite this verse:

﴿ وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهٌ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌ ﴾

*"It is He who is God in the sky, and God on the earth…"*[1]

The Imam ('a) said, 'O Sadir! My ears, eyes, skin, flesh, blood and hair are disgusted with this group of people. They belong to neither my religion nor to my forefathers'. I swear to God, that God will not gather them with us on the Resurrection Day; rather, He will be angry with them."

Sadir said, "Another group consider you to be a prophet, and to prove their claim they cite this verse:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ﴾

*"O apostles! Eat of the good things and act righteously. Indeed I know best what you do."*[2]

The Imam ('a) said, 'O Sadir! My ears, eyes, skin, flesh, blood and hair are disgusted with this group of people; and God and the Prophet (s) are also disgusted with them. They do not belong to my religion nor to my forefathers'. I swear to God that on the Resurrection Day God will not gather them with us; rather, He will be angry with them.'"

Sadir said, "Then who are you?" The Imam ('a) answered, "We are the treasure house of divine sciences and the explainers of Divine Laws. We are infallible. God has made obedience to us obligatory, and has forbidden

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1. *Qur'an* 43:84.
2. *Qur'an* 23:51.

disobedience to us. We are God's proof to the inhabitants of the sky and the earth."[1]

8. Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "No emanation comes from God but that it is first presented to the Prophet (s), then to Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a), and then to the rest of the Imams ('a) one after another until it reaches the last Imam. So the last Imam is not more knowledgeable than the first."[2]

9. Muhammad bin Muslim said, "Talk about a *Muhaddith* (i.e. an inspired one) arose while we were with Imam Sadiq ('a). He ('a) said, 'A *Muhaddith* hears the voice of the angel but does not see him." Muhammad bin Muslim said, "How does he know it is the voice of an angel?" The Imam ('a) responded, "Through the peace of mind and equanimity that he feels in that state."[3]

10. Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "God's Prophet (s) taught 'Ali ('a) a thousand chapters of knowledge, and from each chapter another thousand chapters were opened."[4]

In conclusion, it is necessary to pay attention to this point that the Prophet's (s) teaching of a thousand doors of knowledge to 'Ali ('a) and his education and instruction were not of the common and conventional kinds of education and instruction among the people. It is not reasonable to imagine that God's Prophet (s) could teach Imam 'Ali ('a) a thousand doors of knowledge, and from each door another thousand doors open, in one session and

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1. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 269.
2. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 92.
3. *Ibid*, p. 68.
4. *Ibid*, vol. 26, p. 28.

in a number of limited minutes or hours, in an ordinary manner. Or, that Imam 'Ali ('a) could learn this in an ordinary way.

Therefore, it must be said that this education and training were not of an ordinary kind; rather, they had a different form and mode. Perhaps there was some inner guidance involved. Or, perhaps by means of the power of prophethood and a light from the unseen world, 'Ali's heart was illuminated and realities were opened to him for spiritual discovery (disclosure, intuition).

### *Knowledge of the Unseen (or Supernatural) World*

#### *The Visible World*

Unseen is in opposition to visible. Anything that can be understood by one of the five senses is from the visible world; like matter and all its effects and qualities. All material matters, or their effects and qualities, can be grasped by one of the [five] senses because they have volume and dimension (quantity). Either they can be seen and are understood by eyes, or can be heard and understood by ears, or can be smelt and understood by the sense of smell, or can be tasted and are understood by the sense of taste, and or can be felt and are understood by the sense of touch.

Even electricity, atoms, microbes and the likes of these are considered to belong to the world of vision; because, even if they cannot be seen by the naked eye, nonetheless it is not the case that they cannot be seen at all. It is only that they are so minute and small that our senses cannot grasp

them. Therefore, if we can increase their size, or strengthen our vision by some means, we can sense them.

Hence, such things, no matter how minute and small they are, should not be considered as belonging to the unseen world; because, they are matter or material. They are not completely outside the realm of the senses and essentially unable to be sensed. They can be understood, but the special structure of our senses and cognitive faculties are not such as to be able to sense them [unaided].

There may be animals which can hear those same waves which we cannot hear, or see things which we cannot see, or taste things which we cannot taste, or smell things which we cannot smell. Besides, although such things can themselves not be understood by the senses, there effects and qualities can be understood. Therefore, the body and corporeality, and matter and material, must generally be considered as belonging to the visible world.

### *The Unseen (or Supernatural) World*

The unseen world is the opposite of the visible world. Things which cannot be understood by the senses and are above and beyond the domain of the senses are considered as belonging to the unseen world. These include things like: the Resurrection Day and the Hereafter, heaven and hell, and the rewards and punishments of the afterlife, subjects like God and His attributes, and the angels. Because these kinds of things cannot be seen, heard, smelt, tested, or felt, and our senses do not have the power to grasp them, they are considered as belonging to the unseen world. We cannot see the angels, and our senses do not have the ability to detect them, but not because they are

very small, big, or have subtle bodies. It is because they are above and beyond the horizon of our comprehension, and they have a higher being. They are apart from time and space. They are hidden from our senses and scientific verification. They are considered as belonging to the unseen world.

Therefore, beings of the unseen world cannot be seen in this world or comprehended by means of the senses. Rather, the only way of comprehending them is through intellectual demonstrations, guidance, and confirmation of a person who has comprehension of the visible and unseen worlds. This is the only way for acquiring a scientific concept of them, and finding faith and belief in them. The knowledge that we have of the Resurrection Day, and heaven and hell, are not knowledge we have gained in person or intuitive knowledge. They have not been acquired through [mystic] witnessing, and hence cannot belong to the category of knowledge of the unseen world.

We cannot imagine more than a series of concepts and scientific forms about the unseen world. Thus, we do not have full comprehension of that world. Of course this is not because unseen beings have existential defects or concealment. It is because our cognitive faculties and tools are defective and incapable of comprehending them. In fact, we are hidden from the reality of that world, not that they are hidden from us.

But we can comprehend material matters, bodies, and their characteristics; because, their existence is compatible with our senses and cognitive tools (faculties). Hence they are objects which may be observed and sensed by us; of

course not in a complete and absolute manner, but to a limited extent and with special conditions.

For example, one material phenomenon can be grasped by our senses when it exists in our time. An event which happened two thousand years ago or an event that will occur two thousand years from now cannot be grasped by our senses. Likewise, things which are perceivable can be seen at certain distances depending on their size.

If the distance is more than a specific distance, they are not visible to us unless we strengthen our faculty of vision by artificial means and tools, or by making the object larger. Similarly, if there is a veil or an obstacle in the way, our power of vision is incapable of seeing them, unless we remove the obstacle by some artificial means or tools.

In short, our senses and faculties of perception are limited and defective. It is not such that there are no limits or conditions and that we can perceive objects completely and without any restrictions.

### *The Unseen and the Visible Worlds*

These same events which are hidden from our senses and far from our realm and comprehension are present and visible to God, because His being is neither limited nor imperfect. Rather, He has full comprehension of the world of existence, time, and space. For Him this and that time, or this and that place, have no meaning. It cannot be imagined that His knowledge and comprehension are veiled and obstructed.

Therefore, events of the time of the Prophet Noah ('a) are hidden from us, but are present for God. The story of the

'Companions of the Cave' are hidden from us, but are witnessed by God. Events that will take place a thousand years from now are hidden from us, but are present for God. The Resurrection Day, Heaven, and Hell are hidden from us, but not from God.

In brief, knowledge which is acquired through the five senses is not knowledge of the unseen world. Knowledge whose acquisition does not require the five senses and is attained by means other than the senses is considered as knowledge of the unseen, like knowledge about God.

To put it clearer, according to intellectual demonstrations – which have been presented in their proper place – all events and phenomena of the material world have descended from another world which is higher than this world. In that unseen world, they have a more complete and higher existence. Therefore, if a knowledgeable person employs his powers of perception and uses them to comprehend the external aspects of things in trying to understand the real world and acquire knowledge, this kind of knowledge is not knowledge of the unseen world. On the other hand, a person can use the inner eye to witness the incorporeal realm and the reality of things. Using the internal senses and the stages to existential perfection, one can undertake to discover the external aspects of things without allowing the five senses to interfere. Such knowledge should be considered knowledge of the unseen world.

### *The Unseen and the Seen in the Qur'an*

The Qur'an has also contrasted the unseen world with the world which can be seen; for example:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ قَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ﴾

*"It is He who created the heavens and the earth with reason, and the day He says [to something], 'Be!' it is. His word is the truth, and to Him belongs all sovereignty on the day when the Trumpet will be blown. Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, He is the All-wise, the All-aware."*[1]

﴿اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَى وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ ۝ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْكَبِيرُ الْمُتَعَالِ﴾

*"Allah knows what every female carries [in her womb], and what the wombs reduce and what they increase, and everything is by [precise] measure with Him, the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, the All-great, the All-sublime."*[2]

﴿قُلْ إِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِي تَفِرُّونَ مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مُلَاقِيكُمْ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَى عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

*"Say, 'Indeed the death that you flee will indeed encounter you. Then you will be returned to the Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, and He will inform you about what you used to do'."*[3]

﴿قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ فَاطِرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ عَالِمَ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ أَنْتَ تَحْكُمُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِكَ فِي مَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ﴾

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1. *Qur'an* 6:73.
2. *Qur'an* 13:8-9.
3. *Qur'an* 62:8.

*"Say, 'O Allah! Originator of the heavens and the earth, Knower of the sensible and the Unseen, You will judge between Your servants concerning that about which they used to differ'."*[1]

﴿وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

*"To Allah belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth, and to Him all matters are returned. So worship Him and trust in Him. Your Lord is not oblivious of what you do."*[2]

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ﴾

*"Indeed Allah knows the Unseen of the heavens and the earth, and Allah sees best what you do."*[3]

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَى آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

*"He said, 'O Adam, inform them of their names,' and when he had informed them of their names, He said, 'Did I not tell you that I indeed know the Unseen in the heavens and the earth, and that I know whatever you disclose and whatever you were concealing?'"*[4]

Some past or future events have, in the terminology of the Qur'an, been considered as unseen; for example:

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1. *Qur'an* 39:46.
2. *Qur'an* 11:123.
3. *Qur'an* 49:18.
4. *Qur'an* 2:33.

﴿ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقُونَ أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ﴾

*"These accounts are from the Unseen, which We reveal to you, and you were not with them when they were casting lots [to see] which of them would take charge of Mary's care, nor were you with them when they were contending.*[1]

﴿ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ ﴾

*"These are accounts of the Unseen which We reveal to you, and you were not with them when they conspired together and schemed."*[2]

﴿تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴾

*"These are accounts of the Unseen which We reveal to you. Neither you nor your people used to know them before this. So be patient. Indeed the outcome will be in favour of the Godwary."*[3]

﴿فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلَى مَوْتِهِ إِلَّا دَابَّةُ الْأَرْضِ تَأْكُلُ مِنْسَأَتَهُ فَلَمَّا خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ أَنْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ ﴾

*"And when We decreed death for him, nothing apprised them of his death except a worm which gnawed away at his staff. And when he fell down the jinn realized that had*

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[1]. *Qur'an* 3:44.
[2]. *Qur'an* 12:102.
[3]. *Qur'an* 11:49.

*they known the Unseen, they would not have remained in a humiliating torment."*[1]

### *Is Knowledge of the Unseen Exclusive to God?*

In this regard there is no doubt that God has full comprehension of the whole world of existence. The sensible and the unseen worlds are the same to Him. He is not confined to this and that time or space; because He Himself is unlimited and higher than time or space. Nothing is hidden from Him. He has full comprehension of the sensible world in the same manner that he has full comprehension of the unseen world. But the question is this, "Can someone, apart from God, gain knowledge of the unseen world? Is it only God who has full comprehension of the unseen world? Or, can human beings also have contact with that unseen world?"

Some people have said that knowledge of the unseen world is exclusive to God, and no one, not even the prophets ('a), can gain knowledge of it. To prove their claim, they have cited the following verses from the Qur'an:

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَابِسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ﴾

*"With Him are the treasures of the Unseen; no one knows them except Him. He knows whatever there is in land and sea. No leaf falls without His knowing it, nor is there a*

[1]. *Qur'an* 34:14.

*grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything fresh or withered but it is in a manifest Book."*[1]

﴿وَيَقُولُونَ لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا الْغَيْبُ لِلَّهِ فَانْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ﴾

*"They say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down to him from his Lord?' Say, '[The knowledge of] the Unseen belongs only to Allah. So wait. I too am waiting along with you'."*[2]

﴿قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ﴾

*"Say, 'No one in the heavens or the earth knows the Unseen except Allah, and they are not aware when they will be resurrected'."*[3]

In the foregoing verses knowledge of the unseen world has been considered to be exclusive to God. Besides, prophets ('a) have denied having knowledge of the unseen; for example:

﴿قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَى إِلَيَّ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

*"Say, 'I do not say to you that I possess the treasuries of Allah, nor do I know the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I follow only what is revealed to me.' Say,*

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1. *Qur'an* 6:59.
2. *Qur'an* 10:20.
3. *Qur'an* 27:65.

*'Are the blind one and the seer equal? So do you not reflect?'"*[1]

﴿قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ لَاسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

*"Say, 'I have no control over any benefit for myself nor [over] any harm except what Allah may wish. Had I known the Unseen, I would have acquired much good, and no ill would have befallen me. I am only a warner and a bearer of good news to a people who have faith'."*[2]

﴿وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنِّي إِذًا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

*"I do not say to you that I possess the treasuries of Allah, neither do I know the Unseen. I do not claim to be an angel, neither do I say of those who are despicable in your eyes that Allah will not grant them any good—Allah knows best what is in their hearts—for then I would indeed be a wrongdoer'."*[3]

They say that in these verses God has considered knowledge of the unseen to be exclusive to Him. The Prophet of Islam (s) and some of the former prophets ('a) have clearly denied having knowledge of it. For this reason, no one but God has knowledge of the unseen; not even the prophets ('a).

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1. *Qur'an* 6:50.
2. *Qur'an* 7:188.
3. *Qur'an* 11:31.

***It has been proven for other than God too.***

In response, we agree that knowledge of the absolutely unseen belongs exclusively to God. It is He whose being is unlimited and from whom nothing is hidden. Fundamentally, He has full comprehension of the unseen world, and it is He whose knowledge has no need for another being. We agree that such knowledge belongs exclusively to God. Even the prophets ('a) are not such that they fundamentally have full comprehension of the unseen world, and they do not witness with their eyes that unseen world; because, although the prophets ('a) are more complete than other human beings, their beings are limited, temporal, and spatial. They do not have access to the absolutely unseen world, and the unlimited unseen world does not fit within the realm of their limited being. But it is not such that connection with the unseen world is completely impossible for mankind. Rather, God, who is the owner of the unseen and sensible worlds, can connect some worthy people with that world, open a door to the unseen world for them, and illuminate realities on their polished hearts.

The Holy Qur'an has not negated such knowledge for the prophets ('a); rather, it has confirmed it:

﴿عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَى غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا ۝ إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَى مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا﴾

*"Knower of the Unseen, He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone, except to an apostle He approves of. Then He dispatches a sentinel before and behind him."*[1]

[1]. *Qur'an* 72:26-27.

The above verse says that God knows the unseen, and He does not let anyone have knowledge of it except for chosen people like the Prophet (s). From this it becomes clear that the Prophet (s) is an exception and he can, with divine confirmation, have connection with that unseen world. It is written:

﴿مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّى يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِنْ رُسُلِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَلَكُمْ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾

*"Allah will not leave the faithful in your present state, until He has separated the bad ones from the good. Allah will not acquaint you with the Unseen, but Allah chooses from His apostles whomever He wishes. So have faith in Allah and His apostles; and if you are faithful and Godwary, there shall be a great reward for you."*[1]

﴿إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ۞ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ ۞ مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ ۞ وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُونٍ ۞ وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالْأُفُقِ الْمُبِينِ ۞ وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ ﴾

*"It is indeed the speech of a noble apostle, powerful and eminent with the Lord of the Throne, one who is heard and trustworthy as well. Your companion is not crazy: certainly he saw him on the manifest horizon, and he is not miserly concerning the Unseen."*[2]

From these two verses it may be concluded that the Prophet (s) was in connection with the Unseen. In

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1. *Qur'an* 3:179.
2. *Qur'an* 81:19-24.

addition, in some of the verses God states that we have given news of the Unseen to the Prophet (s). For example, it is written:

﴿ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلْقُونَ أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ﴾

*"These accounts are from the Unseen, which We reveal to you, and you were not with them when they were casting lots [to see] which of them would take charge of Mary's care, nor were you with them when they were contending."*[1]

﴿ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ﴾

*"These are accounts of the Unseen which We reveal to you, and you were not with them when they conspired together and schemed."*[2]

﴿تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

*"These are accounts of the Unseen which We reveal to you. Neither you nor your people used to know them before this. So be patient. Indeed the outcome will be in favour of the Godwary."*[3]

From such verses it is deduced that God reveals some realities and unseen matters to the Prophets ('a) and

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1. *Qur'an* 3:44.
2. *Qur'an* 12:102.
3. *Qur'an* 11:49.

connects them with the unseen world in this way. In general it should be said that in this regard there is no doubt that revelation descends upon the Prophets ('a). Revelation means a kind of special, secret, and extraordinary connection between a prophet and the unseen world. Through God's illuminations a door to the unseen world is opened for a prophet ('a), and a ray from that luminous world shines on his luminous essence. Through the inner eye he witnesses a part of the unseen world.

But it goes without saying that although prophets ('a) can have contact with the unseen world, nonetheless they do not have contact with the absolute and unlimited unseen world. And they cannot derive more benefit from that unlimited world than their limited existential capacity allows. In addition, in these limited usages they also do not have independence, and their knowledge is not essential. Rather, they need God's confirmation and illuminations.

The summary of the matter is that the verses of the Holy Qur'an are of two kinds. One kind negates knowledge of the unseen world from other than God, and another kind confirms knowledge of the unseen world for other than God in a limited manner. But with some reflection, it can be well seen that they can both be possible together. With this same explanation the meaning of the following verses becomes clear:

﴿قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدْعًا مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يُفْعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنْ أَتَّبِعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَى إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ﴾

*"Say, 'I am not a novelty among the apostles, nor do I know what will be done with me, or with you. I just follow whatever is revealed to me, and I am just a manifest warner'."*[1]

In the foregoing verse God's Prophet (s) says that he does not have knowledge of his own future, but (later adds that) he follows God's revelation. It becomes clear that it is possible, through divine revelation, for him to be informed of his own and other people's future.

﴿وَمِمَّنْ حَوْلَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنَافِقُونَ وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَدِينَةِ مَرَدُوا عَلَى النِّفَاقِ لَا تَعْلَمُهُمْ نَحْنُ نَعْلَمُهُمْ سَنُعَذِّبُهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى عَذَابٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

*"There are hypocrites among the Bedouins around you and among the townspeople of Madinah, steeped in hypocrisy. You do not know them; We know them, and We will punish them twice, then they shall be consigned to a great punishment."*[2]

﴿وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا﴾

*"Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed the hearing, the eyesight, and the heart—all of these are accountable."*[3]

﴿مَا كَانَ لِيَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ بِالْمَلَإِ الْأَعْلَى إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ﴾

*"I have no knowledge of the Supernal Elite when they contend."*[1]

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1. *Qur'an* 46:9.
2. *Qur'an* 9:101.
3. *Qur'an* 17:36.

These verses negate the knowledge of God's Prophet (s) in general. However, on the basis of the preceding verses and traditions, it has to be said that he did not have knowledge of the unseen world in his fundamental nature. It was through revelation that he could make connection with the unseen world.

## AN IMAM AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNSEEN

In the foregoing discussions this matter has been proven in general that knowledge of the unseen world is not exclusive to God. Chosen men can, with God's confirmation and illumination, find connection with the unseen world. Prophets ('a) were among those chosen men.

Now this question arises that is an Imam one of those chosen men who have connection with the unseen world? We have to refer to reports and traditions to investigate this issue in order to make the truth clear. Traditions on this subject are divided into several categories.

The first kind: The different kinds of an Imam's knowledge were examined in the foregoing discussions. In the third kind of traditions, it was mentioned that it is possible to use these traditions for this discussion also. Those traditions related that the Imam has connection with God, and he receives certain truths through divine inspiration. However, the Imam's inspiration is not in the category of prophetic revelation. Truths are inspired to his

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[1]. *Qur'an* 38:69.

heart and words from the unseen world reach his ear, but he does not witness the angel of revelation. Day and night, rather hour after hour, additions are made to his knowledge. His soul, together with the souls of former prophets (‘a) and Imams (‘a), ascend to the higher world and return with much knowledge on Thursday nights and the Night of Power.

From such expressions which are available in the traditions it is generally concluded that the Imam also has connection with the unseen world, and issues are put at his disposal. It is necessary that you read the foregoing traditions once more.

## TRADITIONS ABOUT KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNSEEN WORLD

The second kind: We have many traditions in the sources of traditions which say that the Imams (‘a) used to state that they had knowledge of the past and the future, and the earth and the sky. They stated that God could not make obedience to a person incumbent but (at the same time) hide His knowledge from him. For example:

1. Imam Sadiq (‘a) told a group of his companions, “I have knowledge of what is in the sky and on earth, and in Heaven and Hell. I have knowledge of the past and the future. Then he paused and saw that this matter was problematic for the listeners.” He added, “I have understood all these matters from the Book of God for He

has said, 'We have sent down the Book to you as a clarification of all things...'[1,,2]

2. Jama'ah bin Sa'd Khath'ami narrated that Mufaddal asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "May I be sacrificed for you! Is it possible that God would make obedience to a person incumbent and (at the same time) hide His knowledge from him?" The Imam ('a) answered, "No, it is not possible, because God is above such an act."[3]

3. Safwan has quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "God would not make obedience to a person incumbent and (at the same time) hide His knowledge from him."[4]

4. Imam Baqir ('a) said that they asked Imam 'Ali ('a) how much knowledge the Prophet (s) had, whereat he ('a) said, "The Prophet's knowledge was equivalent to the knowledge of all the [former] prophets. Plus, he had knowledge of the past and the present. I swear to God, in whose hands my life is, I have inherited all of the Prophet's knowledge, and I have knowledge of the past and the future up to the Resurrection Day."[5]

5. 'Abd al-'Ali and 'Ubaydah bin Bashir quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "I swear to God, I have knowledge of that which exists in the sky and the earth, of Heaven and Hell, and of past and future events. I have understood all

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1. *Qur'an* 16:89.
2. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 261.
3. *Ibid*.
4. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 110.
5. *Ibid*.

this from the Book of God, and I witness them on the palm of my hand."[1]

6. Abu Basir related that he asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "Did the Prophet Muhammad (s), like the Prophet Abraham ('a), witness the heavenly and earthly beings?" The Imam ('a) said, "Yes, the Prophet (s) could see, and your Imam also witnessed these."[2]

7. Ibn Maskan related that when Imam Sadiq ('a) was interpreting the verse "Thus did We show Abraham the dominions of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those who possess certitude."[3] he said, "God removed the veils of the seven skies for Abraham to see beyond the Throne. He also removed the veil from the earth for Abraham to see what was in the air. He did the same for the Prophet Muhammad (s), and also for the Imams ('a) after him."[4]

8. Imam 'Ali ('a) said, "O people! Ask me before you lose me. I know the ways of the sky more than I know the ways of the earth."[5]

9. Daris Kanasi related that he heard Imam Baqir ('a) say to his companions, "I am surprised at some people who accept our guardianship (*wilayah*), consider us to be Imams, and believe that obedience to us, like obedience to

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1. *Ibid*, p. 111.
2. *Ibid*, p. 115.
3. *Qur'an* 6:75.
4. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 114.
5. *Yanabi 'al-Mawaddah*, vol. 1, p. 208.

the Prophet (s), is obligatory. Nevertheless, they violate their own proof. Through weakness of heart they are enemies with themselves. They consider our right to be incomplete, and find fault with people who have known our right (correctly). Do you suppose that God would obligate obedience to His guardian saints and at the same time hide from them knowledge of the sky and the earth? And that He would disconnect the coming of knowledge for them in regard to issues that arise for them?"[1]

10. Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "I swear to God, knowledge of the first and the last have been given to us." One of the companions asked, "Do you have knowledge of the unseen world?" He ('a) said, "Woe unto you! I have knowledge of the sperms in men's testicles and the embryos in women's wombs. Woe unto you! Expand your breasts, for your eyes to see and your hearts to understand. We are God's proofs among His creatures. However, apart from a believer, whose faith is as firm as a mountain, no one has the ability to bear this matter. I swear to God! If I want to inform you about the sand, I can even though there is no day or night in which the amount of sand doesn't increase. I swear to God! After my death you will hate each other so much that you will kill one another."[2]

11. Abu Bakr Hidr related that Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "O Abu Bakr! Nothing from your town is hidden from me."[3]

12. 'Ali bin Isma'il Azraq narrated that Imam Sadiq ('a) said, "God is wiser, dearer, bigger, and more just than to

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[1]. Usul *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 261.
[2]. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 27.
[3]. *Ibid*, p. 136.

send a proof for the people and then hide anything of their affairs from the Imams ('a)."[1]

13. Ramila quoted Imam 'Ali ('a) as saying, "O Ramilah! The state of every believer, whether he is in the east or in another place, is known to us."[2]

14. Mufaddal quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "God has given me nine things he did not give to anyone before me except the Prophet (s). The ways of knowledge have been opened for me. I have knowledge of *manaya* (time of death), and *balaya* (misfortunes), *insab* (genealogy), and *fasl khitab* (clear speech which separates the truth from falsehood). By God's permission I have seen the celestial world, therefore knowledge of the past and the future are not hidden from me. Through my guardianship God has perfected the people's religion, completed His blessings upon them, and accepted their Islam. Because, on the day of guardianship, God told Muhammad (s), 'Tell the people that I have perfected their religion today, completed their blessings, and accepted their Islam.' All of these are blessings which God has granted me. Therefore praise belongs especially to God."

### *'Ali's ('a) Knowledge of the Unseen World*

The third kind: This is knowledge of the unseen world which has come from 'Ali bin Abi Talib and the other Imams, and it exists in books. They predicted some events which later came about in reality, and the truth of their word became known. Many examples of such traditions

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1. *Ibid*, p. 138.
2. *Ibid*, p. 140.

from each of the Imams ('a) can be seen in books. Some examples follow:

When 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) told people, "Ask me your questions and problems before I am gone from among you. I swear to God! If you ask me about the state of a group which has led 100 people astray and guided another 100 people, I will tell you who was their leader and their motivation." A man stood up and asked him, "What is the total number of hairs on my head and in my beard?" The Imam ('a) answered, "I swear to God that the Prophet (s) had told me that each of the hairs of your head has an angel with it which curses you. And each of the hairs of your beard has a devil on it which misguides you. You have a child in your house that will kill the child of the Prophet (s)." This man was Anas Nakha'i, the father of Sanan bin Anas. Sanan bin Anas was the murderer of Imam Husayn ('a).[1]

### *Habib bin Hamar*

Suwid bin Ghaflah related that one day Imam 'Ali ('a) was busy giving a sermon when a man sitting at the foot of the pulpit stood up and said, "O Commander of the Faithful! I passed through the valley of Qura and was informed that Khalid bin 'Araftah has died. Seek God's forgiveness for him." 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) said, "I swear to God that he has not died and will not die until he has led the army of deviation. Their standard bearer will be Habib bin Hamar." Then, a man at the foot of the pulpit stood up and said, "O Commander of the Faithful! I am Habib bin Hamar. How can you say such a thing about me, when I

[1]. *Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, vol. 2, p. 286.

am a Shi`ah and one of those who love you?" ‘Ali (‘a) said, "You are Habib bin Hamar!?" Habib said, "Yes, I swear to God I am Habib bin Hamar." ‘Ali (‘a) said, "I swear to God, you will be the standard bearer of that army and you will enter Kufa through this gate." He pointed to the *Bab al-Fil* (the Gate of the Elephant).

Thabit al-Thumali (the Somali) reported, "I swear by God! I did not die before seeing Ibn Ziyad send an army with ‘Umar Sa‘d to go to war with Imam Husayn (‘a). Khalid bin ‘Araftah was the commander of that army and Habib bin Hamar was its standard bearer. They entered the Mosque of Kufa through *Bab al-Fil* (the Gate of the Elephant)."[1]

### *Hajaaj*

Isma‘il bin Rija' related that one day ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (‘a) was giving a sermon and speaking about Mulahim. A young man named A'shi Bahilah stood up and said, "Your talk resembles superstition." Imam ‘Ali (‘a) said, "If you are sinful in your talk, may God kill you by (the hand of) Ghulam Thaqif." A number of people at the foot of the pulpit stood up and asked, "O Amir al-Mu‘minin! Who is Ghulam Thaqif?" The Imam (‘a) said, "He is a man who will conquer your city and trample the Divine Laws. He will cut this young man's neck with a sword." They asked, "For how long will he rule?" He (‘a) answered, "Twenty years, if it reaches twenty years." They asked, "Will he be killed, or will he die a natural death?" The Imam (‘a) replied, "He will die of diarrhea." Isma‘il bin Rija' said, "I saw with my own eyes that they

[1]. *Ibid*, p. 286.

captured A'shi Bahilah and brought him to Hajjaaj. They beat and castigated him, and cut his neck in that gathering."[1]

### *'Amr bin Hamiq*

Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) told one of his companions by the name of 'Amr bin Hamiq Khaza'i, "You will be killed after me, and they will carry your head from one town to another. Your head will be the first in Islam to be carried from one town to another."

During the time of Mu'awiyah's caliphate, 'Amr was being pursued. Out of fear, he fled to and sought refuge with his tribe, Bani Khaza`i. But, they handed him over to the caliph's operatives, and he was killed by them. They took his head from Iraq to Mu'awiyah in Syria."[2]

### *Juwiriyah*

Juwiriyah was one of Imam 'Ali's ('a) special companions. One day he came to the Imam ('a) when he was sleeping, and there was a group of companions with him. Juwiriyah called out, "O sleeping man! Wake up. A strike to your head with a sword will colour your beard red." 'Ali ('a) smiled and said, "O Juwiriyah! You too lend me your ear, so that I may inform you of your fate. I swear to God, in whose hands is my soul, that they will take you to that ill-tempered, base man and cut off your hands and legs. They will hang you on the branch of the tree of an unbelieving man.

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1. *Ibid*, 289.
2. *Ibid*, 290.

It has been reported that it was not long after this event that Ziyad arrested Juwiriyah, cut off his hands and legs, and hanged him on the branch of the tree of Ibn Mu'kabir.[1]

### *Maytham Tamar*

Maytham Tamar was another of the special companions of Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Ali ('a) who had heard many secrets from the Imam ('a). When he related them for people, they would accuse Imam 'Ali ('a) of deception and being superstitious. One day Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Ali ('a), told Maytham in the presence of many people, "You will be arrested and hanged after me (after my death). Blood will flow so profusely on the second day from your nose and mouth that it will colour your beard. On the third day, they will drive a spear through your body, and you will attain martyrdom in this way. Wait for that day. You will be hung in the house of 'Amr bin Harith. You will be the tenth person to be hung, and the tree used to hang you will be shorter than all the others. I will show you the date palm on which you will be hanged." After two days Imam 'Ali ('a) showed Maytham that tree.

Maytham would sometimes go to that tree, pray there, and speak with the tree, "May God make you a blessed tree! I have been created for you, and you have grown for me." Sometimes he would see 'Amr bin Harith and say, "Take good care of my neighborhood. But 'Amr didn't understand what he meant and he would say, "Do you want to buy Ibn Mas'ud's or Ibn Hakam's house?"

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[1]. *Ibid*, p. 290.

After the martyrdom of 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), they cut the date palm down. Maytham kept watch over the branch of that tree which remained. Sometimes he would go to there, until they arrested him and brought him to 'Ubaydullah bin Ziyad. They told Ibn Ziyad, "This person was one of 'Ali's closest friends. He asked, "This non-Arab held such a position?" They said, "Yes." 'Ubaydullah asked Maytham, "Where is your God?" Maytham answered, "He waits in ambush for oppressors." 'Ubaydullah asked him, "I have heard that you were one of the special friends of Abu Turab (i.e. 'Ali bin Abu Talib ('a)?" He answered, "To some extent. What do you mean?" 'Ubaydullah said, "I have heard that he informed you about your fate?" Maytham said, "Yes." 'Ubaydullah asked, "Did he tell you what I was going to do with you?" Maytham answered, "My master, 'Ali, informed me that you will hang me and I will be the tenth person to be hanged. The branch used for hanging me will be shorter than the rest." 'Ubaydullah said, "I will deal with you contrary to 'Ali's prediction." Maytham asked, "Is it possible that you can act contrary to 'Ali's prediction, when he was informed by the Prophet (s), the Prophet (s) was informed by Gabriel, and Gabriel was informed by God? I even know the branch on which I will be hung, and I will be the first Muslim on whose mouth they will put a bridle."

'Ubaydullah gave orders for them to take him to prison. Mukhtar was also in prison. Maytham told Mukhtar, "You will be freed. You will rise up to avenge the blood of Husayn ('a), and you will kill Ibn Ziyad."

It did not take long before Mukhtar was freed. They took Maytham to Ibn Ziyad, who gave orders for him to be

hung from the branch of the tree that was near the house of 'Amr bin Harith. It was at that time that 'Amr bin Harith understood the meaning of Maytham's past words. It was for that reason that he ordered his maid to always keep that place clean and light a lamp there. People used to gather around Maytham and he would speak of the virtues of the House of the Prophet (s) and the evils of the Bani Umayyah from on top of that branch. Information reached Ibn Ziyad that Maytham speaks poorly about you, whereat he gave orders that Maytham's mouth should be bridled. In this way, they stopped him from speaking. In accordance with 'Ali's ('a) prediction, on the second day blood started flowing from his nose and mouth. On the third day they pierced his body with a spear, and thus he attained martyrdom.[1]

### *Rashid Hijri*

They took Rashid Hijri to Ziyad. Ziyad asked him, "Did 'Ali tell you what I was going to do with you?" Rashid said, "He told me that you would cut off my hands and legs and then hang me." Ziyad said, "I swear to God that I will act contrary to his prediction, so that his lies may be exposed." Then he said, "Free him." When Rashid was about to leave, Ziyad said, "Bring him back. The best punishment I have for him is that his hands and legs should be cut and he should be hung." They cut his hands and legs, but he did not stop speaking. Ziyad said, "Cut his tongue." Rashid said, "My master, 'Ali ('a), had informed

[1]. *Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, vol. 2, p. 291.

me that they would cut my tongue." They cut his tongue and then hung him.[1]

### *Prediction of the Death of the Khawarij*

When Imam 'Ali ('a) was heading out to the Battle of Nahrawan, he told his companions, "A group of the Khawarij will be killed near the water of the river. Not more than ten of them will remain and not more than ten of you will be killed." The war came to an end just as he ('a) had predicted.[2]

### *Prediction of the Submersion of Basrah*

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a) told the people of Basrah, "Your town will be submerged in water, and everything in the town will be drowned except the town mosque. It is as if I see the mosque like the chest of a chicken in the water." As Imam 'Ali ('a) had predicted, water flowed from the direction of the Persain Gulf and from the famous mountain of Sanam. It inundated Basrah and destroyed the whole town, except for the town mosque.[3]

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1. *Ibid*, p. 294.
2. *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, vol. 3, p. 221; *Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, vol. 5, p. 3.
3. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, p. 55, sermon no. 13.

## THE OTHER IMAMS' (‘A) KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNSEEN

Such kinds of knowledge of the unseen world have also been reported for the other Imams (‘a). Some examples follow.

### *Reports from Imam Hasan (‘a)*

Abu Usamah quoted Imam Sadiq (‘a) as saying that Imam Hasan (‘a) travelled to Mecca on foot. For that reason, his feet became swollen. One of his bondsmen told him it was better for him to mount a steed until his legs got better, but the Imam refused, saying, “When we reach the next house you will meet a black man who has some oil. Buy it so that I can use it to cure my swollen feet.” The bondsman said, “But, we have not yet reached a house where they have this medicine.” The Imam responded, “This medicine may be found in the next house that we come to.”

They walked close to a mile before reaching a house. Suddenly, a black man appeared and Imam Hasan (‘a) said, “This is that same black man I had talked about. Buy the oil from him and give him his money.” The bondsman approached the black man and asked him if he had some oil. The black man asked the bondsman for whom he wanted it. The bondsman said he wanted it for Hasan bin ‘Ali (‘a). The black man asked to be taken to him. When they found the Imam (‘a), the black man said, “O son of the Prophet (s)! I am your bondsman. When I was leaving my house my wife was giving birth. Pray that God gives me a son who will love the people of the House of the Prophet (s).” The Imam (‘a) said, “When you return to

your home you will find that God has given you a sound child who will be one of our Shi`ah."[1]

### *Reports from Imam Husayn (‘a)*

Hudhayfah narrated that he heard Imam Husayn (‘a) say, "I swear to God that the House of Umayyah will unite to kill me, and ‘Umar bin Sa‘d will be their commander." He said this during the time of the Prophet (s), thus I asked him, "O son of the Prophet! Did the Prophet tell you this?" He said, "No." Therefore, I went to the Prophet (s) and told him what Imam Husayn (‘a) had said. He said, "My knowledge is the knowledge of Husayn, and the knowledge of Husayn is my knowledge."[2]

Imam Husayn (‘a) told ‘Umar bin Sa‘d, "You will never eat the wheat of Iraq again." It came about as the Imam (‘a) had predicted, for he had not yet reached the city of Rey when he was killed by Mukhtar.[3]

### *Reports from Imam Sajjad (‘a)*

Hajjaaj bin Yusuf wrote to ‘Abd al-Malik bin Marwan, "If you want to strengthen the foundation of your government, it is necessary to kill ‘Ali bin Husayn (‘a)." In response ‘Abd al-Malik wrote, "Refrain from shedding the blood of the House of Hashim, because with the killing of the House of Hashim the sultanate of the House of Abu Sufyan did not last." ‘Abd al-Malik sent the letter secretly to Hajjaaj. A few days later a letter from ‘Ali bin Husayn (‘a) reached ‘Abd al-Malik, in which it was

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1. *Ithbat al-Hudah*, vol. 5, p. 146.
2. *Ibid*, p. 207.
3. *Ibid*, p. 210.

written, "I received news of the letter you wrote to Hajjaaj about protecting the blood of the House of Hashim. May God be pleased with you." When 'Abd al-Malik read the letter he noticed that the date of the Imam's letter to him corresponded with the date on which he had written to Hajjaaj. Thus, he found trust in the words of 'Ali bin Husayn ('a) and became happy. He sent him some money and told him to write his needs for 'Abd al-Malik.[1]

### *Reports from Imam Baqir ('a)*

Abu Basir has narrated, "We were in a mosque with Imam Baqir ('a). 'Umar bin 'Abd al-Aziz came into the Mosque, and Imam Baqir ('a) said, 'I swear to God that this youth will come to power and will rule with justice, but he will have a short life. The inhabitants of the earth will mourn for him, but the inhabitants of the sky will curse him."[2]

### *Reports from Imam Sadiq ('a)*

Abu al-Faraj Isfahani has written, "The House of Hashim gathered in a meeting and decided to elect Muhammad bin `Abdullah bin Hasan to the caliphate and to pay allegiance to him. They also asked Imam Sadiq ('a) to attend the meeting, and he did. Then, `Abdullah bin Hasan asked the Imam ('a) to pay allegiance to Muhammad. In response to him Imam Sadiq ('a) said, 'The caliphate will reach neither you nor your sons Muhammad and Abraham. It will first reach this man – and he pointed at Safah – and then that man – and he pointed at Mansur. After that it will be among the children of Abbas up until the time that

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1. *Ibid*, 235.
2. *Ibid*, p. 315.

children rule and women become advisers. Your two children Muhammad and Abraham will be killed.'"[1]

### *Reports from Imam Musa bin Ja'far ('a)*

When Husayn Sahib (Fakh) wanted to rise up (in rebellion), Imam Musa bin Ja'far ('a) told him he would be killed. He rose up (in rebellion) and was killed.[2]

### *Reports from Imam Rida ('a)*

Husayn bin Bashar has narrated that Imam Rida ('a) said, "`Abdullah will kill Muhammad." I asked, "'Abdullah, the son of Harun, will kill his brother Muhammad?" He said, "Yes, `Abdullah who is in Khurasan will kill Muhammad the son of Zubaydah who is in Baghdad." It happened as the Imam ('a) had predicted.[3]

### *Reports from Imam Jawad ('a)*

'Umran bin Muhammad Ash'ari narrated, "I was honoured to visit Imam Jawad ('a). After finishing my activities, I told Imam Jawad ('a), 'Umm al-Hasan sent her greetings, and requested that you give her one of your clothes for her to use as her shroud.' The Imam ('a) answered, 'She has no further need of it.' I left, but I did not understand the Imam's words until the news came that Umm al-Hasan had died thirteen days ago."[4]

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1. *Maqatil al-Talibin*, p. 172.
2. *Ibid*, p. 298.
3. *Ithbat al-Hudah*, vol. 6, p. 65.
4. *Ibid*, p. 186.

### *Reports from Imam Hadi ('a)*

Khayran narrated that he was honoured to visit Imam Hadi ('a). The Imam ('a) asked him, "What news do you have about Wathiq?" I said, "He was alright when I was with him ten days ago." The Imam ('a) said, "But the people of Medina say he has died. What news do you have about Ja'far?" I said, "He was in the worst conditions in prison." The Imam ('a) said, "He has ascended to [political] power. What was Ibn Ziyat doing?" I said, "The people were with him and things were being done by him." The Imam ('a) said, "But it was not good for him." Then he became quiet. The Imam ('a) continued, "Divine decrees must happen. Wathiq died, and Ja'far became the caliph and killed Ibn Ziyat." I asked, "When?" He said, "Six days after your departure."[1]

Ayub bin Nuh related, "I wrote a letter to Imam Hadi ('a) informing him that my wife was pregnant and asking him to pray that God grant me a son. In response he wrote, "God will give you a son. Name him Muhammad. Later a son was born to me, and I named him Muhammad."[2]

### *Reports from Imam Hasan 'Askari ('a)*

Abu Hashim Ja'fari narrated, "I wrote a letter to Imam Hasan 'Askari ('a), and in that letter I complained of the hardships of prison, the pain, and the chains. In a written response the Imam ('a) wrote, 'You will perform today's

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1. *Ibid*, p. 213.
2. *Ibid*, p. 256.

noon prayers in your own home.' I was suddenly freed, and I performed the noon prayers in my home."[1]

### *Reports from Imam Mahdi ('aj)*

Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Shadhan Nishaburi related, "I had collected a sum of 480 dirhams, the share of the Imam, but I did not want it to be less than 500 dirhams. Therefore, I added 20 dirhams of my own and sent 500 dirhams to the Imam through Asadi. I did not say anything about adding 20 dirhams of my own. A reply came later that, 'The 500 dirhams which you sent, 20 dirhams of which were added by you, have reached us.'"[2]

These few narratives have been cited as examples. If you refer to books of history, traditions, and the virtues of the House of the Prophet (s), you can find hundreds of such predictions [based on knowledge of the unseen world].

A person must eschew bigotry and obstinacy, and study with a clean and straightforward mind the books of traditions and virtues of the Household of the Prophet (s). In addition, hundreds of predictions have been narrated by different narrators from different cities. If one adds the first and second kinds of traditions whose examples have been previously cited to these, he will become sure that the Imams of the House of the Prophet (s) were not unconnected to the unseen world. Furthermore, they could become connected with it in necessary circumstances and acquire truths from it. But it is necessary to mention a few issues, and we will allude to them in the future.

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1. *Ibid*, p. 286.
2. *Ibid*, vol. 7, p. 284.

## THE LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNSEEN

The fact that the pure Imams ('a) have a connection with the unseen world does not mean that fundamentally they have complete comprehension of that universal and unseen world, nor that they witness that world with their eyes without divine help. Because, they are also fundamentally limited and do not have access to the absolute unseen world. They need God in their existence, and they also need Him in their acquisition of knowledge.

Their difference is that they can use their inner power and make the polished and luminous essence of their being attentive to the unseen world. At that time an aperture to the unseen world is opened to them, and God who is the owner of the unseen world and witnessing – with or without a means – inspires unseen knowledge into their hearts. They have also heard some knowledge of the unseen from God's Prophet (s), and his guidance affected their knowledge. Evidence for this matter may be found in the traditions; for example:

'Amar Sabati related that he asked Imam Sadiq ('a), "Does an Imam have, or not have, knowledge of the unseen world?" He said, "No, but if he wants to know something God teaches him."[1]

Abu al-Rabi' Shami has quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "When an Imam wants to know something, he learns it."[2]

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1. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 257.
2. *Ibid*, p. 258.

Abu 'Ubaydah Mada'ini has quoted Imam Sadiq ('a) as saying, "If an Imam wills to know something, God teaches him."[1]

Mu'amar bin Khalad says a Persian man asked Imam Hadi ('a), "Do you have knowledge of the unseen world?" He answered, "Imam Baqir ('a) said, 'Sometimes knowledge is given to us, whereat we know. And sometimes it is not, so we do not know.' And he said, 'God has given some secrets to Gabriel, who revealed them to Muhammad (s), and he (s) told them to whomever he wanted.'"[2]

### *'Ali ('a) Interprets Knowledge of the Unseen*

In one of his sermons, 'Ali ('a) spoke of some of the things to come. One of his companions said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin, you have been given knowledge of hidden things." Whereupon Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) laughed and said:

"O brother from the tribe of Kalb! This is not knowledge of the unseen (*`ilmu'l-ghayb*). These matters have been taught by the Owner of Knowledge. Knowledge of the unseen means knowledge of the Day of Judgement, and knowledge of the things God has spoken of in the verse,

*'Verily, Allah is He with Whom is the knowledge of the Hour...'*[3]

Therefore, God alone knows what is in the wombs, whether male or female, ugly or handsome, generous or

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1. *Ibid*, p. 258.
2. *Ibid*, p. 125.
3. *Qur'an* 31:34.

miserly, mischievous or pious, who will be the fuel for Hell, and who will be in the company of the prophets in Paradise. This is knowledge of the unseen which is not known to anyone save God. But, other knowledge God taught to His Prophet, he taught it to me, and he prayed for me that my bosom and heart may retain it."[1]

Sadir Sirafi related, "I heard that Hamran asked Imam Baqir ('a) the meaning of the verse, *'the Originator of the heavens and the earth.'*[2]" The Imam ('a) responded, "God has created beings with His own knowledge, without having a previous example. He created the skies and the earth without there having been skies and earth before that. Have you not heard that God said, *'and His Throne was [then] upon the waters.'*[3]" Then Hamran said, "Tell me the meaning of this verse, *'Knower of the Unseen, He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone...'*[4]" The Imam ('a) said, "*'...except to an apostle He approves of.'*[5] I swear to God, Muhammad was one of the people whom God wanted to acquaint with the unseen world. But this that God says about Himself, '…Knower of the Unseen…,' is because God has had knowledge of things which are unknown to His servants, at the level of divine decree and before His creatures and the angels were created. This is knowledge which is especially for God. If He wants, He brings it into existence, and if He does not want, He does not [bring it into creation]. But knowledge, which has reached the level of divine decree and has been

[1] *Nahj al-Balaghah*, sermon no. 128.
[2]. *Qur'an* 2:117.
[3]. *Qur'an* 11:7.
[4]. *Qur'an* 72:26.
[5]. *Qur'an* 72:27.

signed, is that knowledge which has reached the Prophet (s) and has been bequeathed to us."[1]

It is concluded from such traditions that an Imam does not have absolute and unlimited comprehension of the unseen world. It is not true that he is fundamentally and independently aware (or knowledgeable) about the unseen world. One of the major advantages which he has over mankind is that when it is necessary, he finds connection with the unseen world and the required knowledge is given to him.

### *Negation of Knowledge of the Unseen*

In some instances, the Pure Imams ('a) denied having knowledge of the unseen world. However, these traditions should be explained by means of other traditions which affirm that they had knowledge of the unseen world. What they meant was that they did not have fundamental and independent, complete knowledge of the unseen world. For their knowledge, they need God's [illuminative] emanations. Thus, it is possible to reach a conclusion based on these two kinds of traditions. It is better to give an example to clarify the matter.

Ibn Mughayrah related, "Yahya bin `Abdullah bin Husayn and I went to see Imam Hadi ('a). Yahya said, 'May I be sacrificed for you! People imagine that you have knowledge of the unseen world.' The Imam ('a) said, 'Praise be to God! Yahya, put your hand on me. I swear to God, as a result of these words all of the hairs on my body have stood up straight. No, I swear to God, we do not have

[1]. Usul *al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 256.

knowledge of the unseen world. What we say is from the Prophet (s) of God."[1]

Abu Basirah reported, "I told Imam Sadiq (‘a), ‘People say some things.' He said, ‘What do they say?' ‘They say you have knowledge of the number of raindrops, the stars, the leaves on the trees, the weight of the water in the ocean, and the number of the particles of soil.' Imam Sadiq (‘a) raised his blessed hands towards the sky and said, ‘Praise be to God! No, I swear to God that apart from God no man has knowledge of these things.'"[2]

‘Anbasa bin Mas‘ab reported, "Imam Sadiq (‘a) told me, ‘What have you heard from Abi al-Khutab?' I said, ‘I have heard him say, "Imam Sadiq (‘a) put his hand on my chest and said, ‘Memorise and do not forget.'" Abu al-Khutab thinks you have knowledge of the unseen world. He claims that you told him that he was the treasure box of your knowledge and secrets, and the one trusted by your living and your dead ones.' Imam Sadiq (‘a) said, ‘I swear to God that he is lying. My hand has not touched any part of his body except for his hand. He is wrong to consider that I have knowledge of the unseen world. I swear to God, I do not have knowledge of the unseen world. May God not reward or bless me if I have said such a thing about the dead and the living.'"[3]

Sadir narrated, "Abu Basir, Yahya Bazaz, Dawud bin Kathir and I were in Imam Sadiq's (‘a) gathering. All of a sudden Imam Sadiq (‘a) angrily entered the session and sat

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[1]. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 25, p. 293.
[2]. *Ibid*, p. 294.
[3]. *Ibid*, p. 294.

down. He said, 'It is surprising that people think we have knowledge of the unseen world, while apart from God no one has knowledge of the unseen world. I wanted to chastise one of my handmaidens and she ran away. I did not know which room of the house she had hidden in.' Sadir said, 'When the Imam ('a) stood up he entered his house. Abu Basir, Muyasar and I followed him and said, 'May we be sacrificed for you. We heard what you said today about your handmaiden, but we know that you have much knowledge. We attribute knowledge of the unseen to you.'

The Imam ('a) said, 'O Sadir! Have you read this verse in the Qur'an, "The one who had knowledge of the Book said, 'I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.'"[1]' I said, 'Yes, I have read it.' The Imam ('a) said, 'Do you know who that person was who had knowledge of part of the book? And do you know the amount of his knowledge?' I said, 'Tell me so that I can learn.' He said, 'His knowledge was equivalent to a drop from the Mediterranean Sea. How much is this amount of knowledge in relation to knowledge of the whole book?' I said, 'Very little.' He ('a) said, 'Sadir! But this little knowledge, for a person whom God has not informed of abundant knowledge, about which I will speak, is a lot. O Sadir! Have you read this verse, "Say, 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you, and he who possesses the knowledge of the Book'?"[2] I said, 'Yes, I have read it.' He asked, 'Is one who knows the whole book more knowledgeable or one who knows some of the book?' I

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[1]. *Qur'an* 27:40.
[2]. *Qur'an* 13:43.

said, 'Of course one who knows the whole book is more knowledgeable.' The Imam ('a) pointed to his chest and said, 'I swear to God! We have knowledge of the whole book.'"[1]

Such reports denote that an Imam does not have comprehension of the absolute unseen and unlimited knowledge of the unseen world. It is not such that he fundamentally and independently knows everything. But this is not in contradiction with the fact that when necessary he can find connection with the unseen world and receive truths.

The result of this discussion is that there are many recurrently transmitted traditions which have reached us whose purport is that an Imam has connection with the unseen world, and receives necessary truths and matters. The Pure Imams ('a) have in many instances given reports from the unseen world, and these traditions can be seen in the relevant books. The Noble Qur'an clearly states that God, the Wise, Who is the Owner of the unseen and the sensible worlds, informs some exemplary and chosen people like the prophets ('a) about the unseen world. From an intellectual viewpoint also there is no objection whatsoever to this premise.

Therefore, it should be said that when necessary an Imam can get in touch with the unseen world and acquire necessary information (knowledge). But because his knowledge is neither essential nor independent, and he does not have absolute and unlimited comprehension of

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[1]. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 257; *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 170.

the unseen world, there is no objection to saying that this is not knowledge of the unseen.

Shaykh Mufid – may God's mercy be on him – has written, "The Imam of the House of the Prophet (s) sometimes knew what was in the people's minds. They predicted many events before they occurred. They had these advantages. However, knowing the unseen (supernatural) world is not one of the conditions of the Imamate. Rather, it is a special grace (favour) from God which has been bestowed on them, and its reports have reached us. But it is not right to call this knowledge of the unseen; because, it is possible to say that one has knowledge of the unseen world, who fundamentally and without any help, witnesses realities of the world of existence. But one who, by means of education and other divine emanations, acquires knowledge of some unseen (supernatural) matters does not really have knowledge of the unseen world and it is not right to assign this characteristic to him.[1]

### *Objection*

The Noble Prophet (s) and the Imams ('a) used to live like the rest of the people. In their acts, dealings, and social relations they were just like ordinary men. They used to see with these same eyes, hear with these same ears and acquire knowledge of external things by means of these same senses. They used to act according to these same perceptions. They used to judge on the basis of appearances and by means of evidence and proof. They used to consult people in social affairs. They used to

[1]. Shaykh Mufid, *Awa'il al-Maqalat*, p. 67.

consult experts and specialists in technical matters and for the determination (or fixing) of prices. In short, to the extent that we have knowledge of the conditions of the prophets (‘a) and the Imams (‘a), they were just like other people in ordinary life. They never used to use knowledge of the unseen (supernatural) world. Their ordinary and common conduct signifies that they did not have knowledge of the unseen (supernatural) world; otherwise, they would have programmed their lives according to unseen (supernatural) knowledge.

In addition, hardships and tragedies befell the Imams (‘a), and they used to face problems which were not compatible with knowledge of the unseen world. In the  of Uhud, the Islamic army was defeated. Imam ‘Ali (‘a) was struck by a sword (assassinated) in the Kufa Mosque by Ibn Muljam. Imam Husayn (‘a) was martyred in Karbala. Imam Hasan (‘a) was poisoned and martyred and so too were the rest of the Imams (‘a). The occurrence of these events is not compatible with having knowledge of the unseen world. If they had knowledge of the unseen and were aware of the outcomes of events, they should not have put themselves in danger of being destroyed.

***Response***

No one has said, and no one says, that a prophet and an Imam are not human beings, or that they do not acquire knowledge through the senses and the intellect. Rather, they too are like other human beings from the viewpoint of the elemental body. They acquire knowledge using these same instincts and senses. The way they see, hear, smell, feel and taste is exactly like that of other human beings. They find a connection with the outer world by means of

these same perceptions. They evaluate the outcome of affairs and make decisions on the basis of these same perceptions. They are not incomplete human beings; rather, they are complete in this respect. Their ordinary life is exactly like that of other human beings, and that is why they are compatible with other human beings. It was not intended that they should use knowledge of the unseen world in their lives, and to base their ordinary acts and conduct on knowledge of the unseen world.

Nevertheless, if an issue pertaining to illicit and evil acts arose, which if it was committed – even out of ignorance – was abominable and ugly in the people's view and blemished the eminent position of prophethood or Imamate, they would enjoy the benefit of unseen support and remain immune and free from sin. Likewise, if knowing an ordinary issue was necessary to prove prophethood or the Imamate, they could use their inner power and gain a connection with the unseen world in order to acquire the necessary knowledge.

A prophet or an Imam can have knowledge of unseen events, and events to come in the future for others and themselves. But, this kind of knowledge does not change the course of events or change people's deeds or intentions. It is not the source of juridical obligation either; because, knowledge of the unseen world means witnessing the world of existence and the the truth of the real world. One who acquires unseen knowledge of an unseen event witnesses the unseen (celestial, spiritual) world of being and the set of causes and means which result in that event. Through knowledge he comes to know all of the parts of the cause of that event. One who has knowledge of the unseen world knows, by means of knowledge of causes

that a specific event will definitely and out of necessity happen; because the causes and means which bring about that event have come about. When all of the necessary causes exist the effect becomes certain. Knowledge of the unseen world is knowledge of the reality of events and that which is possible.

Therefore, knowledge of the unseen world does not change the course of events and does not affect people's deeds or intentions. A prophet or an Imam flies from the horizon of the material world in an extraordinary state and witnesses with a deep spiritual insight that he himself or another person will perform a certain act based on ordinary knowledge and of his own volition and will. This kind of knowledge cannot stop ordinary knowledge and volition and will, which is the effect of specific causes. It cannot hinder the occurrence of an event when all of the necessary conditions have been met. Knowledge of events and the necessary conditions cannot prevent an occurrence from taking place. Knowledge of the unseen does not bring about obligation, or prohibitions and commands. Duties are determined through ordinary means and through these same senses and instincts. Knowledge of the unseen is from a higher horizon and category, and it does not follow the laws of this world. In that spiritual sight and witnessing of reality, there is no talk of dos and don'ts, or what is illicit or obligatory. Rather, it is about becoming and being.

Yes, if knowledge of the unseen world comes in a miraculous way and for performing an extraordinary matter, it can be the source of effects and affect the work of a prophet or an Imam. For example, it is possible for him to know, through knowledge of the unseen, that such

and such a food has been poisoned, and then refrain from eating it, and show this to be a miracle.[1]

### *An Imam and Other Branches of Knowledge*

In the previous discussions this matter has been proven that an Imam must have knowledge of the religious sciences and the things which are necessary for a leader and statesman to know. Now the question that arises is that should an Imam also have, or should he not have expertise in other fields and branches of science?

Some people say that an Imam must know everything. He should have expertise in medicine, botany, geology, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, physics, chemistry and the other fields of science. He should know all languages and be able to speak any tongue. But others do not regard knowing these sciences to be necessary.

In this regard it must be said that the arguments (i.e. proofs) which were presented regarding an Imam's knowledge did not denote more than this that an Imam must know completely everything related to religion and things which it is necessary for a leader and guide to know. An Imam is a repository of prophetic knowledge. He knows all of that which is licit or illicit and the people's duties. He knows correct beliefs and good morals. He knows political and social laws and individual duties. And, overall he is able to satisfy the people's religious needs.

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[1]. This is a summary of what 'Allamah Tabataba'i has said in *Tafsir al-Mizan*, vol. 17, p. 207.

But those discussions did not prove more than this. The arguments about the Imam's knowledge did not prove that an Imam should also be a specialist in other scientific fields and branches. It cannot be inferred from those arguments that an Imam must be a doctor, an engineer, a mathematician, a geologist, a zoologist, a botanist, an astronomer, a physicist, or a chemist, and, there is no such expectation from him.

Yes, if knowing one of these sciences becomes necessary to prove his Imamate or to guide people, he can use his inner power to connect with the unseen world and acquire the required sciences and knowledge. The origin and source of all realities is at the disposal of an Imam. He knows the way of arriving at the truth; and, whenever it becomes necessary he can use it.

For this same reason, it can be seen in the traditions that sometimes – yes, only sometimes – the Pure Imams ('a) would talk about the special qualities of some herbs, fruits and medicines, the events of the earth and the sky, the stars and the sun, the speech of animals, and would speak non-Arabic languages.

However, they also used to sometimes go to a doctor for the treatment of illnesses, as they did for the treatment of 'Ali bin Abi Talib's head wound. They used to consult [economic] experts to determine the prices of goods. The secret of the matter is that the Imams had (at their disposal) a way of arriving at reality and the key to understanding all truths. Furthermore, due to their essential luminosity and the loftiness of the station of divine guardianship, they could witness all things. But this does not necessitate that due to their elemental body and

acquired knowledge they should know all things. At the same time, if they willed to acquire knowledge of something, they would acquire it; as has been reported in the traditions.[1]

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[1]. In summary, the Noble Prophet (s) and Pure Imams ('a) used to live like ordinary people. They used to acquire knowledge using these same senses. They consulted with the companions in important tasks. And, they judged on the basis of evidence and proof. They used to make decisions on the basis of these same outer appearances, whether in war or in dismissing and appointing governors. And that is why it was possible for incompetent or sometimes even traitorous people to be appointed. The story of *Afak* about `Aishah was a secret before the arrival of revelation. At times they suffered defeat in war. Sometimes they appointed an inept or treacherous commander or governor. For example, 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) dismissed Qays bin Sa'd from being the commander of Egypt, although he had no fault, and appointed Muhammad bin Abu Bakr in his place. According to these same outer appearances, at times they used to worry about the conclusion of their lives or that of their enemies. They used to express ignorance in some issues, because Prophets ('a) and Imams ('a) were supposed to be human beings and live like other people, and – exactly like any other ordinary man – lead and guide other human beings. They were not supposed to use help from the unseen in all instances. The Prophet's and the Imams' companions used to witness their ordinary programmes. That is why some of them used to imagine that the Prophets ('a) and the Imams ('a) were no different from other people from the viewpoint of knowledge. They were also oblivious of the fact that although the Prophet's and the Imams' lives were based on common conventions, they nonetheless had connection with the unseen world and could – when necessary – use its support. Some scholars have made this same mistake.

But, as you have seen previously, some verses from the Holy Qur'an signified that some people – apart from God – can find

### *Imam and Miracles*

A miracle is a supernatural event which takes place through extraordinary – not ordinary – causes and means. For example, it is possible for a walking stick to become a snake, but the common, ordinary, and natural way is that it should come under the influence of effects from the sky and the earth. As a result of a series of actions and reactions, it loses its original form and is changed into another form. It should fall here and there until it changes from one form to another. Eventually it becomes possible for it to become a part of a snake and be given an animal soul. If the material of a walking stick becomes a snake in this way, there is no miracle involved; because, this is the common and ordinary way for a snake to be formed.

But what if this same walking stick instantly and without delay assumes the form of a snake, without being effected by natural and ordinary causes and means. It has not been prepared by the passing of time, or by natural actions and reactions. This act is called an extraordinary act, or a miracle.

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access to the unseen world. The Prophet (s) and the Imams ('a) have in many instances given reports from the unseen world. Many traditions have also been narrated in this regard, which have reached the level of being "*Tawatur*" [traditions which have been transmitted successfully in great numbers] in meaning, and there is no possibility that they could have been forged. Therefore, it must be said that the Prophet (s) and the Imams ('a) could – when necessary – make a connection with the unseen world and receive truths, but still their knowledge was neither fundamental nor independent. Rather, they required God's confirmation and divine emanations.

In order to prove miracles, especially the miracles of the Pure Imams ('a), a number of topics must be discussed.

### *Are Miracles Possible?*

First Topic: Is it possible for something to happen in opposition to the ordinary course of events and without being influenced by natural causes and means, or not? Some people have considered the occurrence of miracles to be impossible. In order to prove their claim, they have said that each one of the events and phenomena of the world of existence has a specific cause and its being emanates from that cause. It is that cause which gives it existence. In the intellectual sciences this matter has been proven that there is a special relation between every cause and effect. That is to say, every effect has a special connection and compatibility with its cause, and it does not have that same relation with other causes. Similarly, every cause has a special relation with its effect which it does not have with other effects. It is for this same reason that every effect comes from a specific cause, and every cause has a specific effect. The Law of Causality is one of the definite and indisputable laws of the world, and it has no exception.

Therefore, every phenomenon and effect must come into being through its own cause. If a specific effect comes into being without the influence and interference of its specific cause, it becomes necessary that an effect should come into being without a cause. But, it has been proven in the intellectual sciences that the existence of an effect without its cause is impossible. How could it be possible that the ordinary and natural causes for a walking stick to become

a snake not be present, but the walking stick become a snake without a cause!?

With this explanation they say that the principle of an occurrence of an extraordinary event is intellectually and rationally impossible.

In response to this talk it has to be said that it is true that known ordinary and natural causes have no influence on the occurrence of an extraordinary event or a miracle. However, this does not mean that a miracle does not have a cause at all, or that an effect appears without a cause. One cannot say that the occurrence of an effect without the influence of a cause is impossible. The occurrence of a miracle is as follows:

That same specific phenomenon had a specific cause, and God, the Almighty was giving it existence in the ordinary way. With regards to a miracle it finds existence through causes other than ordinary and natural ones, and God, the Creator gives it existence through a new and extraordinary way. For example, with regards to the transformation of the walking stick into a snake, the ordinary course is that it should find existence through natural actions and reactions. However, we do not have a definitive proof which confines the cause of the appearance of a snake to that same common, natural cause. There may be another cause, and it can come into being through another cause of which we have no knowledge. What is there to stop us from saying that the soul of the performer of miracles has so much power like that of the Prophet (s) and the Imams ('a) that it can be one of the causes? Without the passage of days or the influence of common natural causes – through an uncommon way which is unknown to us –

they bring an extraordinary (supernatural) influence on the material of the walking stick, and in an instant prepare it for becoming a snake. When the material is ready to accept the soul of the snake, God, the Creator grants the material the form of a snake, and through this uncommon way the snake comes into existence. With this supposition, the being of such a snake is not without a natural cause, but not that common and known cause. It has come into being in a new and extraordinary way and by means of causes of which we have no knowledge.

Of course the existence of such an extraordinary and spiritual power is not impossible for the divine soul of the Prophet (s) and the Imams ('a). It has been proven in psychology and philosophy that man's rational soul has the power of creativity. It can create forms, store and safeguard them within itself. The origin of the soul's knowledge of external things, keeping this knowledge, and remembering it, is those same intellectual forms.

They say that when man witnesses something, after a series of actions and reactions which take place in his eyes, the nervous system and the brain, man's immaterial soul finds the ability to create, in light of its being, a form which from every aspect agrees with the outer (external) reality. After the nervous system and the brain have completely changed after many years, this same form remains intact and is preserved, and he still remembers the form which he saw eighty years ago.

Man's soul can create forms according to external forms, but because man's being is weak and has little power, the forms which he creates do not have external effects. The form of fire is created in the mind but this mental image of

fire does not have any external heat. One imagines the sun, but the mental image of the sun does not have the effects of the external sun.

However, souls are not at one and the same existential level, rather they have the capacity for perfection and progress. It is possible that some souls, as a result of permissible ascetic exercises, become strengthened. By means of worship, attention to God, and detachment from the world of nature, they find strength and thus find connection with the unseen world. They become connected to causes above the world of matter (or metaphysical causes), and seek help from the endless (infinite) power of the unseen world. By means of the divine (heavenly) soul they prepare some matter to accept a specific form. For example, they change the matter of the walking stick into the form of a snake. In the same manner that natural causes safeguard their effects, the soul also – as long as it has attention on its effect – safeguards it and whenever it stops caring for and safeguarding it, its effect goes back to its former state and the snake becomes a walking stick again.

In this supposition, a new phenomenon, namely a snake, has not found existence without a cause. It has also not come into being through the common natural causes. Rather, the powerful soul of the Prophet (s) or the Imam ('a) has used power from the unseen world, affected the internal being, and the spiritual realm of matter without the passage of time and in this way prepared the matter of the walking stick to accept the form of the snake. Then the Giver of Forms affects the matter and the form of the snake is added to the matter, and a snake in a miraculous and extraordinary manner comes into

existence. God the Almighty gives existence to a phenomenon through other than in its ordinary way, according to the will of the Prophet (s) or Imam ('a), so that it may be an evidence and proof for their truthfulness.

In fact, it can be said that material realities and phenomena can come into existence in two ways. One is the common, ordinary and natural way. Every phenomenon which is to come into being in this way requires different actions and reactions to happen on matter over the course of time, so that it may be ready for the acceptance of a specific form. Then, existence must be added to it by God. The second way is contrary to the common and ordinary way, and it involves the Prophet's or the Imam's will and volition. In the second way, attainment of capacity and preparedness for acceptance of a form does not need the passage of time; rather, in a short time capacity is attained and matter is prepared for acceptance of the form. From both internally and the spiritual realm benefit is derived. But the effect in both forms is not without cause.

### *Who creates a miracle?*

Is a miracle something which God does directly and without an intermediate? Do the Prophet (s) and Imam ('a) not play any role except asking God to do something extraordinary? Or, is it the work of the Prophet (s) or Imam ('a) himself and happens according to their will and action?

Some of the verses from the Holy Qur'an have attributed miracles to prophets ('a) and has considered their souls effective in creating miracles. For example, the Holy Qur'an has quoted the Prophet Jesus ('a) as saying:

﴿ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ﴾

*"I have certainly brought you a sign from your Lord: I will create for you out of clay the form of a bird, then I will breathe into it, and it will become a bird by Allah's leave. And I heal the blind and the leper and I revive the dead by Allah's leave. And I will tell you what you have eaten and what you have stored in your houses."*[1]

Elsewhere God tells the Prophet Jesus ('a):

﴿ ...وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنْفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي وَتُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَى بِإِذْنِي...﴾

*"...and when you would create from clay the form of a bird, with My leave, and you would breathe into it and it would become a bird, with My leave; and you would heal the blind and the leper, with My leave, and you would raise the dead, with My leave..."* [2]

With regard to the Prophet Moses ('a) it is written:

﴿قَالَ إِنْ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِآيَةٍ فَأْتِ بِهَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ۝ فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُبِينٌ ۝ نَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ﴾

*"He said, 'If you have brought a sign, produce it, should you be truthful.' Thereat he threw down his staff, and*

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[1]. *Qur'an* 3:49.
[2]. *Qur'an* 5:110.

*behold, it became a manifest python. Then he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to the onlookers."*[1]

In another group of verses, the performance of miracles has been attributed to God, for example:

﴿ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى﴾

*"And We shaded them with clouds, and We sent down to them manna and quails…"* [2]

In the Holy Qur'an, miracles have sometimes been attributed to God, and sometimes they have been attributed to the Prophet (s). Other verses explain how this is possible, for example:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قُضِيَ بِالْحَقِّ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ﴾

*"An apostle may not bring any sign except by Allah's permission. Hence when Allah's edict comes, judgment is made with justice, and it is thence that the falsifiers become losers."*[3]

From this verse, and other verses, it is concluded that a miracle is the work of a prophet ('a) and his soul is effective in bringing about an extraordinary act. However, it is not such that he has complete independence, rather he needs God's permission and confirmation. Without divine emanation and confirmation, he cannot do anything independently. A prophet ('a), from the viewpoint of the elemental body, is a contingent and needy human being

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1. *Qur'an* 7:106-108.
2. *Qur'an* 7:160.
3. *Qur'an* 40:78.

like other men. But he can – with his spiritual power and divine soul – with God's permission and will – perform extraordinary acts. That is why most of the verses in the Holy Qur'an which speak about the prophets' ('a) miracles have limited them to God's will and permission.

### *Proof of a Miracle*

Second Topic: The Noble Qur'an has confirmed the principle of the occurrence of an extraordinary event and miracle and has proven some of them for former prophets ('a). The Qur'an has narrated the story of Moses' ('a) walking stick becoming a snake and swallowing the snakes of the magicians.[1]

It has also told the story of Moses' hand turning white, everything drinkable becoming blood, and toads and lice overwhelming the people of Pharaoh.[2]

It has also recounted the story of the splitting of the sea and the passing of the people of Israel, and the drowning of the people of Pharaoh.[3]

It has also related the story of Jesus Christ ('a) speaking in the cradle, healing the blind and sick, and resurrecting the dead.[4]

The Noble Qur'an proves such miracles for former prophets ('a), and the Qur'an introduces itself as an everlasting miracle.[5]

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[1]. See the *Qur'an* 7:117 & 107; 26: 32 & 45.
[2]. *Ibid*, 27:12; 28: 32; 7: 133.
[3]. *Ibid*, 26:63.
[4]. *Ibid*, 20:30; 3:49; 5:110.
[5]. *Ibid*, 2: 23; 17:88.

Therefore, whoever considers the Qur'an to be God's Holy Book should accept the principle of the occurrence of miracles. Denying miracles and explaining the verses of the Qur'an away is tantamount to denying the basis of the Qur'an. In addition, hundreds of miracles by the prophets have been recounted in books of traditions and history. Hundreds of reporters from different countries, towns, and times have narrated these traditions and miracles, and they have been recorded in books of traditions and history.

From the collection of these traditions it can be concluded that the prophets (‘a) in general had miracles and extraordinary acts. The denial of miracles is tantamount to the denial of the principle of the existence of prophets (‘a).

Belief in miracles is not exclusive to Muslims; rather, the other heavenly religions have also recounted miracles for prophets (‘a) and believe in them.

With regard to the Pure Imams (‘a) also hundreds of miracles, extraordinary acts, and reports about the unseen world have been narrated, and they have been recorded in books of traditions, virtues and history. Hundreds of narrators, each of whom lived in a different town and time, have narrated those miracles and have recorded them in books of history – even in some of the books of the Sunnis.

From the collection of these traditions this matter is proven in general that the pure Imams (‘a) also like the prophets (‘a) had miracles and could perform extraordinary acts when necessary. Miracles which have been narrated for them are miracles which have been narrated for the Prophet of Islam (s) and other prophets (‘a). In the Shi`ah circles, miracles are considered

as one of the necessities of the Shi`ah sect; and, denying them is tantamount to denying the principle of Imamate and the existence of the Imams (‘a).

Those who wish to research this topic further may refer to the following books: *‘Ayyun al-Mu'jizat*, *Bihar al-Anwar*, *Ithbat al-Hudah*, *Usul al-Kafi*, *Madinat al-Ma'ajiz*, *Manaqib Shahr Ashub*, *Ithbat al-Wasiyah of Mas'udi*, *Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, *Dala'il al-Imamah of Tabari* and other books of traditions and history.

It is worthy to note that we do not say that all the miracles which have been reported from the Imams (‘a) and which may be seen in books about the virtues of the Household of the Prophet (s) are one hundred percent true. Possibly, there are false and concocted traditions among them. We do not say more than this that it can generally be concluded, from the general meaning of all the traditions, that the twelve Shi`ah Imams (‘a) brought miracles and extraordinary happenings.

### *Denial of Miracles*

Some unlearned and biased writers have denied miracles and extraordinary acts that have been attributed to the prophets (‘a) altogether. To prove their claim, they have also cited many verses from the Qur'an.

They have written, "It is very surprising that the Prophet of Islam used to say that he had no knowledge of the unseen world, and these people say their Imams had knowledge of the unseen world. They even recount stories of their knowledge of the unseen world. It is very surprising that the Prophet of Islam used to say he was

incapable of performing miracles, and these people say their Imams are capable of performing miracles. And, they write many stories [in this regard]."

In one place in the Qur'an, the people request a number of miracles and say:

﴿وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ يَنْبُوعًا ۝ أَوْ تَكُونَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِنْ نَخِيلٍ وَعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجِّرَ الْأَنْهَارَ خِلَالَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ۝ أَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَاءَ كَمَا زَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا أَوْ تَأْتِيَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ قَبِيلًا﴾

*They say, 'We will not believe you until you make a spring gush forth for us from the ground. Or until you have a garden of date palms and vines and you make streams gush through it. Or until you cause the sky to fall in fragments upon us, just as you would aver. Or until you bring Allah and the angels [right] in front of us...'*[1][2]

In response, it is written:

﴿سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا﴾

*"Immaculate is my Lord! Am I anything but a human, an apostle?!"*[3]

Someone has written, "The system of God is not a plaything for every man who wants to show his talents to interfere in and change. What they have said about Moses ('a), Jesus ('a) and the other prophets ('a) is lies! And even more than them is the Prophet of Islam, who

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1. Ahmad Kusrawi, *Davari*, pp. 30-31.
2. *Qur'an* 17:90-92.
3. *Qur'an* 17:93.

failed to produce a miracle whenever they asked him. This, his Qur'an, is in our hands."[1]

In response to this biased writer we say that when one decides to discuss a matter from the viewpoint of the Qur'an, he has to gather all the verses related to the topic and impartially examine each one of them; but this writer, for the purpose which he had in mind, decided to deny miracles altogether from the beginning. For this reason, he has deliberately ignored other verses from the Qur'an and has only clung to the aforementioned verse.

Are there not many verses in the Qur'an which prove the miracles of Noah ('a), Salih ('a), Moses ('a), Jesus ('a) and other prophets ('a)? Has the Noble Qur'an not said that Jesus ('a) spoke in the cradle and resurrected the dead? Has the Glorious Qur'an not spoken about Moses' ('a) walking stick becoming a snake, Noah's ('a) storm, and Salih's ('a) she-camel? But the aforesaid writer, with complete impudence, says, "What they have said about the miracles of Moses ('a), Jesus ('a), and the other prophets ('a) is lies!" One who intends to research a matter, and does not have ulterior motives, does not deliberately ignore all these verses from the Qur'an about miracles; and, he does not cling to the apparent meaning of only one verse.

It would have been appropriate for the aforesaid writer to pay attention to the preceding verse which says:

﴿قُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا﴾

[1]. Ahmad Kusrawi, *Sufigari*, p. 81.

*"Say, 'Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another'."*[1]

As you can see in this verse the Qur'an formally introduces itself as a miracle, but the writer does not mention this because of his preconceived ulterior motives. He only refers to the verse which follows this one.

Incidentally the aforesaid verses do not disprove miracles. The Prophet (s) – in those initial verses of the Qur'an – introduces the Qur'an as a miracle and says that should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur'an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assist one another.

But the unbelievers saw that they were unable to challenge the Qur'an. Not only couldn't they bring a book like the Qur'an, they couldn't even bring one chapter like it. Thus, they began to bring excuses. They said they would not believe until the Prophet did one of the following: (i) made a spring gush forth for them from the ground, (ii) brought a garden of date palms and vines with streams running through it, (iii) caused the sky to fall upon them, (iv) brought God and the angels before them, (v) had a house of gold, or (vi) ascended into the sky and brought down a letter from God for them.

It was in such a time of bringing excuses that God the Almighty told the Prophet (s), "Tell them, "I am but a (mere) human being and an apostle. I have no control over the earth and the sky to act according to your wishes and continually change the events of the world.'"

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[1]. *Qur'an* 17:88.

The unbelievers had two kinds of requests here. One kind consisted of impossibilities which could not happen even by way of miracles, and their demand was out of ignorance. For example, they asked the Prophet (s) to bring God and the angels before them. God is not a body to be brought, even miraculously, before a few faultfinders! Another example is their asking him to cause the sky to fall upon them. Was it possible that God would destroy the sky and the solar system and drop it on their heads? Had their request been granted, they certainly would have died. Then where would they have been to believe?

In response to such a request can anyone say anything other than, "I am but a human being and an apostle.I have no control over God, the angels, the earth and the sky?"

The second kind of their demands, were not essentially impossible to come about through miracles. Nonetheless, we should not forget two points.

First Point: Even if the Prophet (s) and the Imams ('a) had the power to perform miracles and their souls were so powerful that they could seek help from the unseen world and do extraordinary acts, nonetheless they were human beings and needed God's confirmation to perform miracles. It was not such that they would, without divine permission and confirmation, perform miracles.

﴿ وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ ﴾

*"...and an apostle may not bring a sign except by Allah's leave".*[1]

Second Point: The world of creation has a stable and unchanging system, and is managed according to the law of causality. Miracles are an exception to this system. The exception of the law of miracles is meant to be used when necessary. It is not meant to be used to create dramatic scenes for faultfinders, nor to be used by just anyone from anywhere to demand an extraordinary act. One may say, "Make a spring gush forth for me from the ground." Another will say, "Create a garden of date palms and vines for me and make streams run through it." Yet another will say, "Cause the sky to fall upon us." Others will say, "Bring God and the angels before us." Perhaps another will say, "Make me a house of gold." One person may say, "Ascend into the sky." Someone else may say, "Bring down a book (signed by God) for me to read."

The prophets ('a) and the Imams ('a) did not come to disturb the orderly system of creation and create, according to the demands of this one and that one, a dramatic scene and a show of miracles. Prophets (s) and Imams ('a) are supposed to perform miracles when necessary. The occasion of the revelation of the aforesaid verse pertains to a situation where there was no need for the manifestation of a miracle, because initially the Prophet (s) had introduced the Qur'an as a miracle to

[1]. *Qur'an* 13:38.

them. But, when they failed to challenge it, they started to bring excuses and demanded a number of miracles and extraordinary acts.

The best answer to such faultfinding people was to say, "I am but a man and an apostle. In order to perform miracles I need God's permission and confirmation."

Even so, had their request been granted they still would not have believed, for they had said, "We will not believe your ascension until you bring down for us a book (written and signed by God) that we may read." And, had such a book been brought down, they would have doubted it was written and signed by God.[1]

The gist of the matter is this that in light of the evidence in other verses from the Qur'an, the aforesaid verse does not intend to completely deny the existence of miracles. It states that the performance of miracles and extraordinary acts are dependent on God's will and permission. How can the Prophet of Islam (s), whose Qur'an has proved many miracles from the former prophets ('a), and who considers himself higher than them, say that he unfortunately cannot perform miracles. This can never happen at all.

### *Conformity is Necessary*

Third Topic: One of the objections that has been raised regarding miracles is a lack of similarity and agreement with the claimant. They have said, "Every proof must have connection and conformity with the claimant." For instance, if one said he had an expertise in medicine,

[1] "They would surely say: Indeed a spell has been cast on our eyes; rather we are a bewitched lot." (*The Holy Qur'an*, 15:15).

people would ask him to cure a particular disease to prove his specialization. It is not reasonable to ask him to fly to the sky to prove his word; because, there is no connection between medicine and flying.

If someone said he had an expertise in ethical matters and the nurturing of souls, they would tell him to implement his ethical programmes and teach people morals, and thus prove his word. No reasonable man would ask him to resurrect the dead and give sight to people who were born blind. If one said he had a specialization in politics and governance, they would ask him to provide proof which conforms to this same claim. They would never ask him to make stones speak, to make a deer speak to him, nor to make a wild lion submit to him.

In regard to the Prophet (s) and the Imams ('a) too, this matter must be the same. If one claims to be a prophet ('a) or an Imam ('a), they tell him to legislate pleasing acts of worship, comprehensive laws and programmes, and to implement among them his laws and programmes. [They tell him that] if they find these to be in conformity with reason and logic, and if they produce shining results, his prophethood or Imamate will be proven for them and they will believe in it. It would not be reasonable for them to tell him to fly to the sky, to resurrect the dead, to bring a tree forward, or to speak with a deer; because, these acts have no conformity with the issue of prophethood and Imamate.

***Response***

In response to this objection it should be said that there is also conformity between prophetic claims and miracles;

because, both are extraordinary matters. In fact, one who claims prophethood says that he is in contact with the unseen world and that he witnesses, with the inner eye, the supernatural world. In addition, God inspires Divine Laws and commandments to his heart through the angel of revelation. The prophet ('a) then has the responsibility to communicate these to people, and to strive to teach and guide them.

It goes without saying that such a large claim, especially from a human being who from the point of view of bodily powers is not much different from other human beings (He eats and drinks like other human beings, marries like other human beings, sleeps like other human beings, and walks in the streets and market place like other human beings.) is a surprising and extraordinary matter. What is more extraordinary than an ordinary man claiming to be in contact with the unseen world, to be witnessing, with the inner eye, the supernatural world, and to be the locus of the emanation of God's knowledge?

Due to the fact that the prophet ('a) claims to receive revelation and have connection with the unseen world, which are extraordinary matters, he must bring an extraordinary matter and a miracle which originates from the unseen world. In this way, he can prove God's special attention to him in order to prove his claim.

A prophet ('a) says, "Although I am a human being like you, nonetheless I have the advantage of having God's special attention. He teaches me truths through the angel of revelation. That is why I can perform miracles with God's leave. If my claim [to prophethood] was false, God would not confirm me through miracles." Therefore,

between the claim of prophethood or Imamate and the manifestation of a miracle there is perfect connection and conformity. Therefore, the objection of a lack of conformity is answered.

This objection has arisen mainly because the aforesaid writer has not understood the reality of revelation and prophethood. He has imagined that a prophet (‘a) performs miracles to prove the authenticity of beliefs or religious laws; while this is not so. Rather, prophets (‘a) perform miracles to prove that they have a connection with the unseen world and revelation.

### *The Difference between Miracles and Magic*

A prophet (‘a) and Imam (‘a) can perform an act which is contrary to the path of ordinary causes and acts which others cannot perform. Similarly, a magician can do acts which are impossible through ordinary causes and which others cannot do. So what is the difference between magic and miracles? And, how can we distinguish a prophet (‘a) from a magician?

In response to this question, it can be said that there are many ways for distinguishing miracles from magic.

First Difference: Magic is not a genuine and real act; rather, the magician influences the people's senses and intellectual powers and subdues them with his own thoughts. He does something to make them imagine that an unreal act is a real act, and to make them comprehend things as he has willed. The same applies to the story of Prophet Moses (‘a) and the magicians. Pharaoh's magicians cast ropes, (walking) sticks and tools of magic in front of people. Through their magic they made them

appear to be real snakes. Their tools started moving about in such a manner that the people imagined them to be real animals. Fear and dread overcame everyone, while in actuality there were no snakes. Rather, their sight had been influenced and they saw ropes and sticks to be snakes. The Qur'an says:

﴿ فَلَمَّا أَلْقَوْا سَحَرُوا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ وَاسْتَرْهَبُوهُمْ وَجَاءُوا بِسِحْرٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴾

*"So when they threw, they bewitched the people's eyes and overawed them, producing a tremendous magic."*[1]

As you can see, in this verse magic has been called captivation and misguidance of the people's eyes. The Qur'an has also said:

﴿فَإِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى﴾

*"Behold, their ropes and staffs appeared to him by their magic to wriggle swiftly."*[2]

The Qur'an considers magic to be a kind of deception and that is why it has been called a 'trick'.

However, a miracle is a genuine and real matter. A prophet ('a) or an Imam ('a) truly interferes in the external world and brings into being a real and existential matter. If a snake comes into being by way of a miracle, it is a real – not an unreal and imaginary – snake.

Prophet Moses' ('a) walking stick was really changed into a snake, and it really swallowed the magic of the magicians. Although the magic of the magicians appeared to be snakes in the eyes of the spectators, it was actually

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1. *Qur'an* 7:116.
2. *Qur'an* 20:66.

nothing but ropes. In reality Moses' ('a) snake swallowed ropes, not snakes.

God told Prophet Moses ('a):

﴿ وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوا إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدُ سَاحِرٍ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ أَتَى﴾

*"Throw down what is in your right hand, and it will swallow what they have conjured. What they have conjured is only a magician's trick, and the magician does not fare well wherever he may show up."*[1]

When the magicians saw their tools of magic completely destroyed, they understood that Moses' ('a) work was an existential and miraculous act. It was entirely different from their kind of work; hence they immediately submitted to Prophet Moses ('a) and believed [in his message]. They were so firm in their belief that they persevered in spite of Pharaoh's threats and torture, and never lost their faith.

In short, miracles produce real and existential forms in all instances. If Jesus ('a) used to resurrect the dead and give sight to people who were born blind, it was a real [and existential] matter. If Salih ('a) produced a she-camel from a stone, it was a real [and existential] matter. None of these were unreal or imaginary matters. But with regard to magic – to the extent that I know and have heard – a magician does not do anything but captivate and control the people's senses. He makes an unreal matter appear real to them. Even in instances where he creates enmity between two friends, he captivates and controls their

[1]. *Qur'an* 20:69.

cognitive powers and senses, and makes them mistrust each other.

Second Difference: A magician needs a series of particular acts for his magic to be effective. Either he repeats certain invocations, writes certain things, draws a sketch, or does some things. Thus, he needs a series of acts to do magic. But with regard to miracles, there is no need for particular acts. A prophet's (‘a) will suffices for the unseen causes to complete the coming about of a miracle, and a miracle happens with God's confirmation.

Third Difference: A miracle is never defeated. That is to say, when the soul of a prophet (‘a) or Imam (‘a) wills, with God's leave, to make something happen, it definitely happens and no power can prevent it from happening or invalidate it after it has happened. That is because a miracle originates from God's power, and no power can resist God's will and power. But magic can be defeated by a stronger power. Another more powerful magician, a prophet, or an Imam can invalidate an act of magic, or obstruct its effectiveness, in the same manner that the Prophet Moses (‘a) invalidated the magic of Pharaoh's magicians, and Imam Sadiq (‘a) defeated Mansur's magicians.

Fourth Difference: The magician's work is within a limited spectrum and arena. He cannot do everything. He may fail to do certain things asked of him. However, miracles are not limited to a particular spectrum, and anything which is essentially possible and which is willed by a prophet (‘a) or an Imam (‘a), and is permitted by God, can take place as a miracle.

Fifth Difference: Magic is a science and an art, and one can only become a magician and perform acts of enchantment by learning and knowing its principles. In performing such acts, belief and connection with God or disbelief and disconnection with God are the same. With regard to miracles, one cannot reach that station through learning and thinking, because it is not a science or an art. The only way to perform a miracle is to have faith in God and connection with His infinite power.

### *Miracles and the Acts of Ascetics*

You have read in books and magazines, and heard from informed people, that ascetics [or Yogis] can also perform extraordinary acts which other people cannot perform. With one look they make water boil. They throw a rope into the sky, and it does not come down. They keep something suspended in the air. With one look, they make a man go to sleep. We must see what the difference is between these kinds of acts and miracles.

One of the differences between these is that ascetics can only reach this position and acquire powers after passing through special and difficult ascetic practices. They live in reclusion. They refrain from delicious foods and bodily pleasures. They do very difficult acts. They submit their body to special pressures. Until they pass through these stages, they cannot perform astonishing acts. It is not possible for one to have such powers without ascetic practices, or from the very beginning of childhood.

But performing miracles does not require special ascetic practices, passing through introductory stages, and the acquisition of special powers. One with the ability to

perform miracles can seek power from the unseen and perform extraordinary acts without undertaking special practices. It is even possible to have such powers in infancy and childhood, as Jesus Christ ('a) spoke in the cradle.

A second difference is that ascetics cannot do each and every act. Their ability is limited to specific acts which they have repeated several times. It is not such that they have powers to do every astonishing act any time and any place. But, miracles are not limited to special conditions, a time, a place, and to a specific act.

A third difference is that ascetic practices (or yoga) are a science and an art. One can become an ascetic (or yogi) by knowing its principles and performing necessary acts. Belief in God, or a lack of belief, does not have any effect on it. This is contrary to miracles, which are not considered a science or an art, and which are not attainable by learning.

### *Miracles and Supernatural Acts (Kiramah)*

For some people who are close to God, and the deserving servants of God, one kind of extraordinary matter has been proven. In technical terms it is called *kiramah* (supernatural acts). The basic existence of supernatural acts is in general irrefutable. And there are examples of supernatural acts in the Qur'an:

﴿كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّى لَكِ هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ﴾

*"Whenever Zechariah visited her in the sanctuary, he would find provisions with her. He said, 'O Mary, from*

*where does this come for you?' She said, 'It comes from Allah...'."*[1]

It has been narrated that in the winter she was provided with summer fruits, and in the summer with winter fruits. Such kinds of supernatural acts have been proven for some of God's chosen people like Salman Farsi, Uways Qarani, Fatimah al-Zahra ('a), and others who have been reported in books. Apparently the base of the matter is irrefutable. The question that needs to be considered is, "What is the difference between a supernatural act and a miracle?"

A miracle and a supernatural act have two things in common. The first is that they are both real, extraordinary acts. The second is that the performers of a miracle and a supernatural act are both God's close and chosen servants. However, they have a number of differences.

The first difference is that the performer of supernatural acts reaches that station because of his seriousness in worship and servitude to God, contrary to the performers of miracles, like the Prophet (s) and Imams ('a), who have a kind of essential superiority. God the Almighty has given these chosen people a kind of essential superiority which enables them to perform extraordinary acts. It is not such that they have attained this station through worship. It is true that an Imam and a prophet exert every effort in worshipping God, and they are excellent servants of God. But, they have not attained the station of essential nearness to God and able to perform miracles because of their worship acts. Rather, they were chosen and were near to God from the beginning.

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[1]. *Qur'an* 3:37.

The second difference is that a miracle is always a response to a challenge. That is to say, the Prophet (s) and the Imams ('a) perform miracles to prove their prophethood and Imamate. Then they tell the people, "This extraordinary act is proof of our claim. If you do not accept, perform something similar to it." On the other hand, the performer of supernatural acts – although he is someone near to God and chosen by Him – makes no claims about the performance of supernatural and extraordinary acts.

### *The Superiority of an Imam and the Way of Selection*

One of the issues which has been a subject of discussion between the Sunni and Shi`ah is the superiority of the Imam. The Sunni say, "It is not necessary for the Imam to be more complete and virtuous than everyone else. It is possible that there is an individual or individuals among the people who are more complete than the Imam in knowledge, piety and other human virtues. And yet, an individual who is not as complete is elected to the Imamate." To prove their claim they cite the caliphates of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. They say, "Despite the fact that 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a) was more virtuous than everyone else, the Prophet's companions elected Abu Bakr to the Imamate and caliphate." In the sermon of books they write, "Praise be to God who gave priority to the less virtuous (Abu Bakr) over the more virtuous (Ali bin Abi Talib)."

In contrast, the Shi`ah believe that the Imam is more complete and virtuous than all of the individuals in a society. No one better than him will be found among the people. To prove this matter, they have cited many reasons

and have gone far and wide. But I believe, in light of the past discussions, that there is no need to repeat those proofs here. If you read the topic on the necessity of the existence of the Imam carefully one more time, this matter will become clear to you that the Imam is the best, most complete, and most virtuous of all people. God, who selects the Imam, would never prefer the less virtuous to the more virtuous. It is people, who contrary to God's pleasure, overlook essential perfections and prefer the less virtuous to the more virtuous. We have no intention of repeating the past topics, but we would like to remind in general that an Imam is an infallible individual who has connection with the unseen world. All of the religious sciences and teachings are at his disposal. He believes in all of the correct tenets of faith. No deviation or inaccuracy of any kind is found in his beliefs. His spiritual and moral qualities are at the highest level of perfection, because they derive from beliefs which are one hundred percent correct. His deeds are the best of deeds because they arise from the best beliefs and morals. Since he witnesses with the inner eyes all of existence, and he has knowledge of the real sciences and true teachings, he does not stray from the straight path of religion. He travels on the straight path of Islamic law. Such a person's beliefs are never affected by falsity and corruption, and his beliefs are more perfect than everyone else's. He is immune from indecent qualities and bad morals. He is beautified with the best and noblest of human qualities. His deeds and conduct are the perfect example of religion. An Imam is the people's guide and leader. He must be on the straight path of religion, and he must invite and guide other people to that same way.

From the conclusions which have been made here and which were previously proven with evidence and demonstrations, it is concluded that an Imam is a perfect example of religion and the most complete and virtuous individual of his time.

In traditions too, the Imam has been introduced as the most complete individual. For example, in a long tradition that describes an Imam, Imam Rida ('a) said, "An Imam is immune from sin and error. He is knowledgeable and known to be patient. He is the cause of order in the religion, honor for the Muslims, the anger of the hypocrites, and the destruction of the unbelievers. The Imam is unparalleled in his time, and no one reaches his level. The world can never find anyone equal to him. All virtues are granted to him without him learning or requesting them. He is beautified with all virtues and perfections, but without requesting or learning them. Rather, it is an advantage which God the Merciful has granted him.[1]

### *Selection of an Imam*

The method of selecting an Imam is the oldest and most important issue which has been a subject of discussion among Muslims. It is this same issue that divided the Muslims into two sects: Sunni and Shi`ah. The Shi`ah believe that the selection of an Imam and a true caliph is not the people's responsibility, and they cannot interfere in such an important matter. They say, "It is only God, Who through the Prophet (s), can appoint an Imam and introduce him to the people." They also say, "An Imam

[1]. *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 1, p. 200.

must be infallible. He must be one hundred percent immune from sin and error, because he is the guardian and custodian of religion. He must know all the laws and rules that God has revealed to the Prophet (s). The Imam's knowledge is not of a common and ordinary kind, and he has not acquired it through ordinary ways for it to be mistaken. Of course this matter has been thoroughly examined previously and has been proven with evidence and demonstrations, and there is no need for repetition.

According to the particular belief which the Shi`ah have, they say, "Only one who can recognize people who are infallible and knowledgeable can interfere in the selection of an Imam, and that is no one but God. It is God who has knowledge about the inner power of infallibility and the lofty station of an Imam's knowledge. God knows best those who can execute and guard religious programs and laws. How do people know who has infallibility and this high station of knowledge, for them to be able to choose him? They are influenced by people's outward appearances. It is likely that individuals will be found who have good outward appearances and seem to be religious and virtuous. They attract the people's attention; but inside, they are corrupt and impure. They wear the garment of asceticism and virtue for their own ominous goals.

Therefore, an Infallible Imam (‘a) can be known through three ways. The Prophet (s), who has connection with the unseen world, appoints him. The former Imam (‘a), who is also infallible himself and has connection with the unseen world, introduces him. Or, he should perform miracles to prove that he is infallible and an Imam.

However, the Sunnis believe that the selection of the caliph and Imam has been entrusted to the people themselves, and they can interfere in this selection. They have recommended three ways of selecting the caliph: consensus, consultative council, and the appointment of successors.

### *Consensus*

They have said that if people unanimously agree to appoint a specific person to be caliph, his caliphate is proven and it becomes obligatory to follow him. To prove this matter, they have cited the method and conduct of the Prophet's companions. They have said, "After the sad demise of the Prophet (s), his companions held a meeting and shared ideas about appointing a caliph. They paid allegiance to Abu Bakr because they found him competent for that position. Then, the rest of the people also paid allegiance to him. Thus, Abu Bakr was appointed to the caliphate, and not a single person objected to this. Therefore, the consensus of the Prophet's companions in selecting Abu Bakr is one of the ways of proving the caliphate."

An objection has been raised against them that not all the Muslims swore allegiance to Abu Bakr, and so there was no real consensus achieved. Firstly, Muslims from other countries were not present in Medina to pay allegiance [to Abu Bakr]. Secondly, not all the people of Medina attended that so called meeting. Thirdly, the people of the House of the Prophet (s) and some of the Prophet's companions and relatives refused to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr. Therefore, there was no consensus in the appointment of Abu Bakr as caliph.

To avoid this objection, they have said, "The presence of all Muslims is not necessary to achieve consensus. If the people knowledgeable in solving issues and making contracts, the distinguished members of society, informed people, and specialists decide on a matter, consensus is achieved. In the appointment of Abu Bakr it was such people who participated."

In order to simplify the matter, some have said, "Even if only one man appoints a person to the caliphate and pays allegiance to him, his caliphate is proven and others also have to swear allegiance to him. To prove this matter, they have cited 'Umar's action, when he paid allegiance to Abu Bakr and the rest of the Muslims followed."

But the Shi`ah believe that the method used to select Abu Bakr was not a legitimate way, and has no validity from the view of Islamic law. They have examined this issue from different points of view and have raised objections. We will briefly allude to some of these objections.

First Objection: It has been thoroughly proven previously that an Imam must be infallible and immune from sin and error and forgetfulness. He must have knowledge of the true laws and rules of religion. Therefore, the one who appoints him must be one who can recognise an infallible man, and no one but God is able to recognise an infallible man. Therefore, supposing that all the people agree to appoint a certain man as caliph, their action would still not be valid and authoritative.

Second Objection: In the story of Abu Bakr's election, consensus was not at all achieved, because very few people paid allegiance to him in that meeting. Even some of the people who were present in the meeting refused to

swear allegiance to him. In addition, some of the Prophet's (s) greatest companions refused to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr. These included: ʻAli bin Abi Talib (ʻa), ʻAbbas bin ʻAbd al-Muttalib, Salman Farsi, Miqdad, Abu Dhar Ghaffari, `Abdullah bin ʻAbbas, Saʻid bin ʻIbadah, Abu Sufyan, Habab bin Mundhir, Zubayr, Fazl bin ʻAbbas, Qays bin Asʻad, Usamah bin Zayd, Khalid bin Saʻid, Buridah Aslami, ʻAmmar bin Yasir, Khazimah bin Thabit, Abu Ayub Ansari, ʻUmar bin Saʻid, `Abdullah bin Masʻud, ʻUthman bin Hanif, and Ubi bin Kaʻb. How can it be said that Abu Bakr's appointment was confirmed by the Prophet's companions?!

Third Objection: Such consensus is not a proof. If one or a number of people pay allegiance to someone, what proof is there that others should follow him? What obligation does the allegiance of people knowledgeable in solving issues and making contracts bring on other people? Why should other people follow them blindly and unquestioningly?

They have said, "Since Abu Bakr's caliphate was proven in this way; therefore, it becomes clear that it was a legitimate way." But this is not a correct way of proving something. This way of reasoning is circular in technical terms. You want to prove Abu Bakr's caliphate. Then in the middle of your reasoning, you say, "Since Abu Bakr's caliphate was proven in this way; therefore, it becomes clear that it was a legitimate way." What proof do you have for the authoritativeness of such an incorrect consensus? Are the actions of a number of the Prophet's companions a proof for others?

Fourth Objection: From the study of the life of the Prophet (s) it can be concluded that for the survival of religion, the preservation of order, and the security of the Muslims, he used to show great diligence. He would immediately appoint a governor for every town which was conquered by the Muslims. He would appoint a commander for every contingent he sent to battle, and sometimes he would appoint substitute commanders. He would appoint a governor to manage the affairs of Medina when he travelled, because the Prophet (s) had knowledge of the consequences of division and disagreement between the people. In light of this, would he possibly neglect the appointment of the caliph and leave the young Islamic nation without a leader?

'Aishah told her father in the last days of his caliphate, "Do not leave Muhammad's nation without a leader." Did the Prophet (s) care less than 'Aishah about the state of Islam?

If he had entrusted selection of the caliph to the people, he should have clearly stated this important, vital matter. He should have also explained the method and conditions for the selection of the caliph.

### *Consultative Council*

They have said, "It is also possible to select a caliph through consultation and the exchange of ideas. If the distinguished members of society select a caliph through consultation, it becomes obligatory to follow him." To prove this matter, they have cited the story of 'Uthman's selection. When 'Umar was approaching death, he selected 'Ali bin Abi Talib ('a), 'Uthman, Talhah, Zubayr,

Sa'd bin Abi Waqas and 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf and introduced them to the people. He told these six people, "Select one from among yourselves to become caliph." He also told the companions, "After burying me, put these people in a room. They have three days to consult with each other, share ideas and select one [amongst themselves] as caliph. If five or four people agree in the selection of a caliph, and one or two of them disagree, cut the necks of those who disagreed."[1] Therefore, it is concluded from the acts of the Prophet's companions that this also is one of the legitimate ways of selecting a caliph.

The Shi`ah believe that this is not a legitimate, nor correct way. Their reasons are as follows. Firstly: It has been proven previously that an Imam must be infallible and have knowledge of the true laws of religion. The one who selects him must also be one who can recognise an infallible man, and that is no one but God. How can people like 'Uthman, Talhah, Zubayr, Sa'd bin Abi Waqas and 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Awf know who is really infallible, and thus select him as caliph?!

Secondly: If the selection of a caliph is the people's right, on what legal basis did 'Umar limit this right to six people and deprive others of it!? Why should six people be able to decide for one general right and determine the fate of all the people? Why should their action be binding on other people? Citing 'Umar's act to prove 'Uthman's caliphate is also a kind of circular reasoning.

To prove this matter, they have cited this verse:

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[1]. *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, vol. 2, p. 461.

﴿وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ﴾

*"...and their affairs are by counsel among themselves..."*[1]

However, it is clear to researchers that the aforesaid verse does not prove their claim. This verse advises the believers to do their work with consultation. But it does not prove that if they selected a caliph through consultation, it would be obligatory to obey him. Supposing that consultation was authoritative, it would have to include all people, not just six.

If the verse means that all of the Muslims' work must be done with consultation, then why did 'Umar not consult the Prophet's companions when selecting those six people? Rather, he did this in a unilateral and dictatorial manner. And why did Abu Bakr not consult anyone when he selected 'Umar?

### *Appointment of a Successor*

They have said, "The Prophet's caliph can also appoint his successor. To prove this matter, they have said that when Abu Bakr was approaching death he selected 'Umar and no one objected. Therefore, it becomes clear that one of the ways of selecting a caliph is the appointment of a successor."

The Shi`ah say, "If the appointment of a successor is carried out by an infallible Imam, it is authoritative and valid. That is because an infallible person knows who else is infallible, and he can introduce him to the people. But if this selection is done by a fallible person, it is neither

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[1]. *Qur'an* 42:38.

authoritative nor valid. A fallible man cannot recognize an infallible one. Besides, what right has a fallible man to interfere in the people's right and obligate them to follow someone?"

It has been said, "Abu Bakr did this and no one objected." But, this too is not correct; because, some companions did object. However, they did not pursue their objections.

In any case, the program of the Sunnis is to defend and approve the actions of the Prophets' companions. They want to confirm what was done. Since the selection of the caliphate of the first, second and third caliphs was carried out in three different ways they have confirmed these actions, and they have considered these three ways as legitimate for proving the caliphate. They have taken a past action to be proof for itself.[1]

### *Fault-finding*

One writer has written, "The foundation of Shi'ism is based on the idea that a caliph should be appointed by God, not the people. We ask, 'What is the reason for this statement?' The book of Islam is the Qur'an. Where has this been stated in the Qur'an? How can this be true and nothing be said about it in the Qur'an?' Besides, after the death of that pure, Arab man, they sat and spoke together. First they selected Abu Bakr. After his death was 'Umar. After his death was 'Uthman. And after he was killed, 'Ali

[1]. Although the discussion of the appointment of a caliph is very broad, we have discussed it in brief; because, the aim was to discuss the general topics of Imamate, not the immediate caliphate of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a). In this regard, you can refer to books on theology.

was chosen for the caliphate. This behavior clearly shows the baselessness of those words. These were people who had bravely come to Islam when it was weak in the beginning. They were harmed in struggling for its advancement. They had fought for it. How can this be believed that the pure, Arab man would put such a man aside and based on his own will choose someone for the caliphate.

They say, 'The caliph should be infallible, the bravest, the most knowledgeable, and the best person. Only God could make such a choice.' We say, 'Where do you get this from? If this is true, the founder of Islam should have said this, not that you make something up.'"[1]

If you read the above statement carefully, you will discern its weakness and the writer's ulterior motive. There is no need for a long answer. It has been previously proven that an Imam must be infallible, because he is the custodian and executor of Divine Laws. He must be one hundred percent uncontaminated by sin, mistakes, and lapses. Intellectual reasoning, verses from the Qur'an, and traditions have been presented to prove this matter. Therefore, the one who appoints him must be one who can completely recognise an infallible man, and that is no one but God. Therefore, the Shi`ah belief is not without proof and demonstration for this opinionated writer to ask, "What is the reason for this statement?"

He continues on to say, "The book of Islam is the Qur'an. Where has this been stated in the Qur'an? How can this be true and nothing be said about it in the Qur'an?"

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[1]. Ahmad Kusravi, *Davari*, pp. 21-22.

This writer is seeking excuses in saying that a verse must be revealed to prove every issue. He has imagined that every religious topic, along with its details, should be explained clearly in the Qur'an. If something has not been stated clearly in the Qur'an, this shows its falsehood.

Experts who are familiar with the Qur'an and its style of writing know that the Qur'an is a divine book which consists of universal principles of religion. It does not deal with every particular detail of religion and its explanation. Many matters such as religious laws, general rules, and particulars of the religion like acts of worship, morals and types of transactions have not been explained in detail in the Qur'an. Rather, it is the Prophet (s) and the Pure Imams ('a) who have explained these matters. It is not enough to just rely on the Qur'an in order to know the Islamic laws and rulings. If this were the case, religion would be in shambles.

If the subject of Imamate was clearly stated in the Qur'an with all its details, That divine book could not have remained without changes and distortions till the Judgement Day. It would have been in danger of being changed and distorted. Those same people were present when the Prophet (s) said, "Bring me pen and paper so that I may write my will for you not to go astray after me." They said, "Illness has overcome him and he is delirious. The Qur'an is enough for us."[1] However, in the Qur'an it is clearly written:

﴿وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى ۝ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى﴾

[1]. *Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, vol. 2, p. 55; *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, vol. 2, p. 185.

*"Nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him] ..."*[1]

And yet, those same people ignored the events at Ghadir Khum, with all its glory and the emphasis and endorsements made about it. They tried to explain it away and bring excuses about it, even though only a few months had passed. These are the same people who said about the candidacy of Sa`d bin `Ibadah for the caliphate, "Kill him."[2]

When such people saw that a verse or verses from the Qur'an were not compatible with their rule and position, and clearly showed the falsehood of their caliphate, they would have looked for a solution. It was possible they would have also distorted the verses of the Noble Qur'an, or deleted a chapter or chapters from it, and say, "The rest of the Qur'an is enough for us." In this way it was possible that this divine book, which was to remain till the Judgement Day, would have been subjected to change and distortion. It would no longer have been reliable. It is for this reason, and other reasons, that the subject of Imamate has not been discussed expansively and clearly in the Qur'an.

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1. *Qur'an* 53:3-4.
2. *Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid*, vol. 2, p. 25.